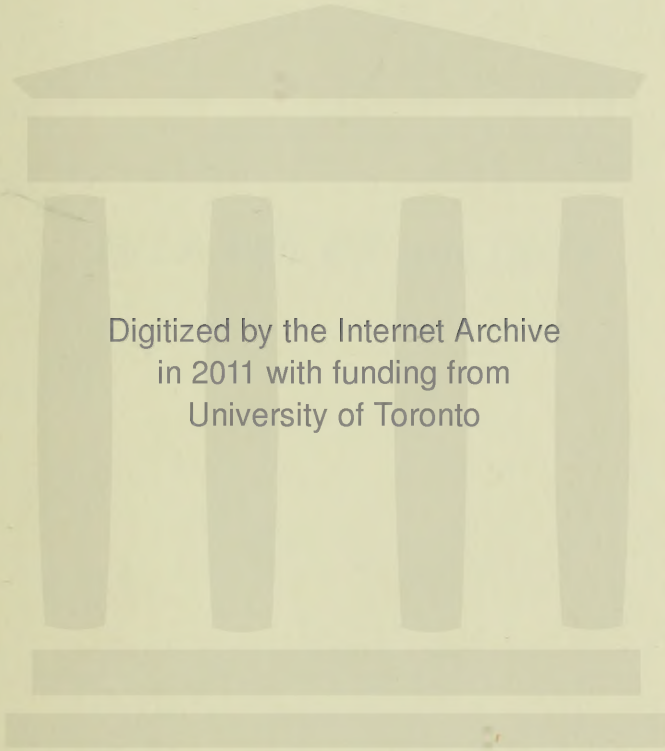

PILLARS OF SOCIETY

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF THE WORKS OF HENRIK IBSEN.

[Those plays to which no publisher's name is appended are not yet translated into English. The date given is that of the publication, or first performance, in Norway or Denmark.]

1850. *CATILINA.*
THE HERO'S MOUND.
1853. *ST. JOHN'S NIGHT.*
1855. *LADY INGER OF ÖSTRAAT* (*Scott*).
1856. *THE FEAST AT SOLHOUG.*
1857. *OLAF LILIEKRANS.*
1858. *THE VIKINGS AT HELGELAND* (*Scott*).
1862. *LOVE'S COMEDY* (*Duckworth*).
1864. *THE PRETENDERS* (*Scott*).
1866. *BRAND* (*Heinemann*).
1867. *PEER GYNT* (*Scott*).
1869. *THE LEAGUE OF YOUTH* (*Scott*).
1873. *EMPEROR AND GALILEAN* (*Scott*).
1877. *PILLARS OF SOCIETY* (*Scott*).
1879. *A DOLL'S HOUSE* (*Scott*).
1881. *GHOSTS* (*Scott*).
1882. *AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE* (*Scott*).
1884. *THE WILD DUCK* (*Scott*).
1886. *ROSMERSHOLM* (*Scott*).
1888. *THE LADY FROM THE SEA* (*Scott*).
1890. *HEDDA GABLER* (*Heinemann and Scott*).
1892. *THE MASTER BUILDER* (*Heinemann*).
1894. *LITTLE EYOLF* (*Heinemann*).
1896. *JOHN GABRIEL BORKMAN* (*Heinemann*).
1899. *WHEN WE DEAD AWAKEN* (*Heinemann*).

FRK. BETZONICK (COPENHAGEN) AS LONA HESSEL.

PILLARS OF SOCIETY

PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

BY

HENRIK IBSEN

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION, BY

WILLIAM ARCHER

LONDON: WALTER SCOTT
PATERNOSTER SQUARE

Translation, by William Archer, first published in the "Camelot Classics" volume, 1888; *revised for the edition of* 1890; *again revised for this edition,* 1900.

INTRODUCTION.

SAMFUNDETS STÖTTER, SKUESPIL I FIRE AKTER, was published in Copenhagen, October 11th, 1877. It was written in Munich during the previous summer. The second of Ibsen's prose plays of modern life, it followed *The League of Youth* after an interval of eight years. Its immediate predecessor in the roll of Ibsen's writings is *Emperor and Galilean*, 1873. It may be noted that Björnstjerne Björnson had in the meantime followed the lead given by Ibsen in *The League of Youth*, and produced in 1875 two important modern plays in prose, *The Editor* and *A Bankruptcy*, the latter of which had been a great success. Busybody critics, noting a certain outward similarity of scene and environment between *A Bankruptcy* and *Pillars of Society*, decided that Ibsen had written his play in a spirit of emulation. "The laurels of Miltiades," said one of them, "would not let Themistocles sleep." We, in the fuller light brought by the intervening years, can see in *Pillars of Society* simply an inevitable stage in Ibsen's development.

On account of some temporary misunderstanding with the management, the poet withheld the play from the

Christiania Theatre. It was first seen on the stage at the Royal Theatre, Copenhagen, on November 18th, 1877, with the following cast :—

Bernick	EMIL POULSEN
Mrs. Bernick	FRU ECKARDT
Olaf	CHR. CHRISTENSEN
Martha	FRK. DEHN
Johan Tönnesen	V. WIEHE
Lona	FRU JACOBSEN
Hilmar Tönnesen	A. ROSENKILDE
Rörlund	JERNDORFF
Rummel	OLAF POULSEN
Vigeland	LIEBE
Sandstad	FERSLEV
Dina Dorf	FRK. WINSLÖW
Krap	V. KOLLING
Aune	F. A. CETTI
Mrs. Rummel	FRU PHISTER
Mrs. Holt	FRK. HANSEN
Mrs. Lynge	FRU HILMER

This was an admirable cast, including almost all the best forces of the theatre; and the success was very great. Ibsen was now much better known to the Danish theatrical public than when *The League of Youth* was produced in 1870. *The Pretenders* had been acted in 1871, *The Vikings at Helgeland* in 1875, and both had been very popular. So great had been the growth of his reputation, that whereas the first performance of *The League of Youth* had drawn a little less than £95, the first performance of *Pillars of Society* drew £236, the largest receipt of the season. It has in all been acted

53 times at the Royal Theatre, where *The League of Youth* has been acted 24, and *A Doll's House* 66 times.

From the criticism, six columns long, which appeared in *Fædrelandet*, I extract the following passages, not as being particularly luminous, but simply as showing "how it struck a contemporary":—

"As regards technique this play is a triumph for the author. It is planned and executed with extraordinary ability. The dramatic structure soars aloft from firm foundations, stone is laid on stone with unfaltering precision, unwearying care, . . . the mortising is admirably exact. . . . There is not a superfluous speech, scarcely a wasted word; and it is not through unnatural soliloquies or tedious expositions that the dramatic web is unrolled before the audience, but through natural and easy conversations, which from the first seize the attention, and continuously work up the interest until the catastrophe is reached."

It is curious to compare this eulogy with the utterances of the London press, to be quoted presently. The critic, however, had his own reservations to make :—

"Ibsen's figures are sharply enough projected, and chiselled with nervous vigour; the footlights throw a strong enough light on them from the one side. But it seems as if they moved in front of a great void. One misses the background of a firm and clear theory of life, to throw them into relief; one misses the rays from above, the light from eternity, which should tone down the colours, round off the outlines, and give to the contorted features a milder and more human expression."

The play was first performed in Norway at the Norwegian Theatre, Bergen, November 30th, 1877, and was first seen in Christiania, in a Swedish translation, at the

Möllergade Theatre, November 6th, 1878. It may be noted that Ibsen had in his younger days been manager of both these theatres. At the Christiania Theatre, now restored to the poet's good graces, it was produced March 7th, 1879, and was the play chosen for the final performance in the old theatre, June 15th, 1899, prior to the opening of the new National Theatre. It had in the interim been performed 54 times. The first performance in Sweden took place at the Dramatiska Theater, Stockholm, December 13th, 1877. In Finland the play was produced in 1878 at the Swedish Theatre, Helsingfors, and in 1883 at the Finnish Theatre.

But it is in Germany that the piece found, and continues to find, its warmest reception. In a letter dated from Berlin. February 5th, 1878, Dr. Georg Brandes wrote :—

"There is a veritable epidemic of *Pillars of Society* in Berlin at this moment, and that not because Ibsen is particularly well known, but on account of the great lack of modern plays, and the convenience of having no royalties to pay.

"The Belle-Alliance Theatre made the beginning with *Die Stützen der Gesellschaft*, translated by Wilhelm Lange. The press notices were exceedingly favourable. At the same time the Stadttheater announced the play, with local allusions omitted, and freely adapted by Emil Jonas. Herr Jonas is a contributor to the *Tageblatt*, the paper whose very able critic, Oscar Blumenthal, recently remarked in dealing with a bad play by Hedberg,[1] that hitherto only one Swedish poet, namely Björnson (!), had succeeded in winning laurels in Germany; for the others, such as Ibsen and Hedberg, the laurels grew too high. People who think of Ibsen as a Swedish poet naturally

[1] A Swedish dramatist.

see no incongruity in his being 'adapted' by Herr Jonas. Meanwhile the National Theatre announces a translation prepared by the poet himself in collaboration with Frl. Klingenfeld; yesterday the Ostend Theatre advertised yet another version; and one or two additional theatres have the piece in rehearsal."

The productions were, in fact, five in number, and took place in this order:—

Belle-Alliance Theatre -	Friday, Jan. 25.
Stadttheater - -	Saturday, Feb. 2.
National Theatre - -	Sunday, Feb. 3.
Ostend Theatre - -	Wednesday, Feb. 6.
Reunion Theatre - -	

Thus it was being played simultaneously at five theatres —"a success without parallel in Berlin theatrical history," says the *National-Zeitung*.

Ibsen was at this time not entirely unknown on the German stage. *The Pretenders* had been acted in 1875-76 at Munich, Schwerin, Meiningen, and Berlin, and *The Vikings* in 1876 at Munich, Dresden, and Vienna. Translations of *The League of Youth* and *Brand* had been published, but not acted. It was *Pillars of Society*, however, that established his fame with the theatre-going public of Germany.

The critic of the *National-Zeitung*, writing of the first Berlin production (the full translation by W. Lange), said:—

"Ibsen is a poet with a great deal of stuff in him, whose will and skill rise far above the everyday level. He is a master in the creation of strongly-marked characters and situations, and knows how to interest the spectator in the flights of his spirit

towards the ideal. But he lacks the brevity and decision of utterance, and the perspicuity of composition, indispensable to the dramatist. His too numerous and too loquacious groups of characters dissipate the interest. Therefore his works must all be adapted in order to fit them for our stage. . . . He is laconic where he ought to be copious, and copious where he ought to be laconic."

A few days later, writing of Jonas's adaptation, the same critic remarked :—

"Ibsen's drama possesses a kernel not only of poetical but of genuinely dramatic merit, to get at which we are, however, forced to break through a husk of epical inventions."

This the excellent Kammerath Jonas was considered to have done. According to Dr. Brandes, he had reduced the first forty pages of the play to four or five, cut out altogether the "Society for the Moral Regeneration of the Lapsed and Lost," and placed the whole exposition in the mouth of Hilmar Tönnesen, who confided the family history to Dr. Rörlund. His whole first act played for only a few minutes, and the suppression of the social background rendered the entrance of Lona Hessel totally ineffective. The parts of Hilmar and Dina were so curtailed as to be absolutely colourless; while Johan Tönnesen was converted, for some inscrutable reason, into an oiled and curled dandy. On the other hand, Dr. Brandes found a good deal to praise in the Bernick of Herr Emil Hahn and Frl. Kelly's Lona Hessel.

It must be admitted that Jonas's adaptation seems to have been the most successful of the Berlin productions. It was performed 28 times; and the adapter boasted that

in the majority of German theatres it was preferred to the more authentic versions. He seems to have claimed copyright in the achievements of his blue pencil, for he took legal steps to prevent the Reunion Theatre from pirating his piracy. I gather, however, that the unadulterated Ibsen has in the main succeeded in ousting Herr Jonas from the German stage. In one form or another, the play has gone the round of all the leading German theatres, and has taken a permanent place in the repertory of many. Halvorsen, in the bibliographical notes to the *Collected Edition* of Ibsen (vol. vii.), gives the following summary of its progress through the German-speaking countries :—

"Before the end of 1878, it had been added to the repertory of no fewer than 27 Court and Municipal theatres in Germany and Austria; in 1879 several other theatres took it up; and since then every season has seen it either produced at additional theatres or re-studied and re-mounted at theatres where it had already been acted. The following are a few of the more important of these productions and revivals :—Deutsches Theater, Berlin, 1889, 1891, 1896; Berliner-Theater, 1894; Lessing Theatre and Schiller Theatre, Berlin, 1896; Königliches Schauspielhaus, Berlin, March 20th, 1898; Deutsches Volkstheater, Vienna, 1890 and 1896; National Theatre, Buda-Pesth, 1890; Court Theatre, Dresden, 1896; Court Theatre, Stuttgart, 1897; Pollini's Theatre, Hamburg, 1897; Burgtheater, Vienna, 1895 and 1897, etc., etc. In its German form the play has been produced at 60 theatres at least, and acted over 1200 times."

Twelve hundred times in Germany—in England, twice! That is rather a startling contrast, curiously illustrative of the radical difference between the conditions of theatrical life in the two countries.

Within a few weeks of the appearance of the play in 1877, I made a complete translation of it, for which, however, I failed to find a publisher. As it was still more improbable that any manager should be willing to produce it in its original form, I next proceeded to make an adaptation of it, not unlike the German adaptation of Herr Jonas, though not, I hope, quite so arbitrary. The exposition was, if I remember rightly, effected by the same means as in the German version; and, with a view to awakening the interest of the audience as early as possible, the great scene between Bernick and Johan Tönnesen, in which the truth as to the Dorf imbroglio is revealed, was transferred from the second act into the first. In all other respects the original was faithfully reproduced, except that Rörlund's and Bernick's speeches in the last act were greatly curtailed, and Bernick was made (so the press notices remind me) to express an intention of leaving the town and starting life afresh elsewhere. For convenience of pronunciation, some of the characters were re-christened; and as it was thought that the English public would be discouraged by the phrase *Pillars of Society*, the word *Quicksands*, used by Lona Hessel in a crucial situation, was chosen as the title.

This adaptation was a foolish affair, and I am far from defending it. At the same time, there are certain extenuating circumstances to be remembered. Ibsen was not in those days the master technician he afterwards became. So far as one could see, prose drama of modern life was likely to be a mere episode in his career. The most important works he had yet produced—*Brand*, *Peer Gynt*, and *Emperor and Galilean*—had not been intended for the stage at all; and it seemed probable that

The League of Youth and *Pillars of Society* would prove to be mere passing relaxations, from which he would return to severer labours in verse or historic prose. In short, it was impossible as yet to discern the full strength of Ibsen's individuality, and to recognise the folly of attempting to tamper with it. Adaptation, moreover, was the fashion of the day: a vile fashion, but the time was not ripe for rebellion against it. So far, my plea in mitigation applies to Herr Jonas's version no less than to mine; but there was this further excuse for my course of action, that it would assuredly have been impossible to get the unadapted play produced in England, whereas in Germany there was clearly no difficulty in the matter. I made no more alterations than seemed absolutely necessary if the play was to find a hearing at all. If it was better that Ibsen should be imperfectly known to English playgoers than that he should not be known at all, I cannot wholly repent of the means I took to that end.

The first person to whom I read the adaptation was Mr. W. H. Vernon, whose success in Mr. Grundy's *Mammon* (Feuillet's *Montjoye*) seemed to point him out as the best possible Bernick. Mr. Vernon at once seized upon the play with sympathetic enthusiasm, and for months tried to get it accepted by the regular managers. In vain. Though rumours of its unique success in Germany had by this time reached England, not a single manager could be found to look at it. At last Mr. Vernon determined to bring it out at his own expense at the Gaiety Theatre, where "experimental matinées" were then very much in vogue. After little more than a week's rehearsal, the play was produced on the afternoon of December 15th, 1880. The following is an exact repro-

duction of the playbill, with one or two errors of the press corrected :—

THE GAIETY PROGRAMME.

Sole Lessee and Manager.....Mr. John Hollingshead.

AFTERNOON PERFORMANCES.

(499TH)

On WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, December 15th, at 2.30, will be acted, for the First Time in England, a Play in Four Acts, entitled

QUICKSANDS;

OR,

THE PILLARS OF SOCIETY.

By HENRIK IBSEN. Translated and adapted from the Norwegian by WILLIAM ARCHER.

Consul Karsten Bernick - -	Mr. W. H. VERNON
Sandstad, Astrup, Nilsen } Merchants - - - -	Mr. VINCENT, Mr. GIRARDOT, Mr. FREEMAN
Johan Hessel (Bernick's brother-in-law)	Mr. ARTHUR DACRE
Hilmar Hessel (Mrs. Bernick's cousin) -	Mr. G. CANNINGE
Dr. Borck - - - - - -	Mr. T. BALFOUR
Krupp (Bernick's Clerk) - - -	Mr. G. RAIEMOND
Hansen (Bernick's Master-Shipwright)	- Mr. A. C. HATTON
Olaf (Bernick's son, a boy of eleven)	- Master ARNOLD
Mrs. Bernick (Bernick's wife) - -	Miss M. A. GIFFARD
Martha (Bernick's sister) - - -	Miss FANNY ADDISON
Lona Hessel (Mrs. Bernick's step-sister)	- Mrs. BILLINGTON
Dina Dorf - - - - -	Miss CISSEY GRAHAME

Produced under the direction of Mr. W. H VERNON.

Mr. Vernon's Bernick was an admirable performance, and the cast as a whole was reasonably good; but the mounting was very meagre, and the atmospheric contrasts

indicated by the poet—the cool interior and hot sunshine without of the first and second acts, the gathering storm of the third act, and the luridly tempestuous evening of the fourth—were scarcely indicated at all. When four acts pass in one scene, it is of the utmost importance that the scene should be agreeable to the eye, and that every effort should be made to get variety out of shifting effects of light. At the Gaiety, I remember, the one ornament of the Bernick mansion was a solitary barometer. For three acts the audience looked at it and wondered why it was there ; and when, at the end of the third act, Krap went up to it and tapped it before announcing to Bernick that a storm was brewing, people were too much relieved at the solution of the mystery to attend to the fateful words which bring the curtain down. The barometer, if I remember rightly, was a suggestion of my own. Its ludicrous effect in that absolutely bare room was a lesson in practical dramaturgy.

The audience, however, received the play well, and at the end I made my first and last bow before the curtain. I mention this because it is recorded to my discredit in Halvorsen's invaluable *Lexikon*, as though by "taking the call," I claimed authorship of the play. Let me hereby assure the editors of future editions (Halvorsen, alas ! is no more) that the appearance of the adapter at the end of a play was, in those days, an established convention, involving no sort of claim to authorship, and that his non-appearance was apt to be construed as a confession of failure. The performance, in this case, had not been by any means a failure, and it was only fair to Mr. Vernon and the other artists engaged in it, that I should play my part in the established ritual.

The critics, for the most part, received the play with

tolerance, if not with actual sympathy. The name of Ibsen was not yet the red rag to them that it became nine years later. An article upon *Love's Comedy*, *Brand*, and *Peer Gynt*, by Mr. Edmund Gosse, had appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* so early as 1873; but it had evidently escaped the notice of the dramatic critics. What little they knew of Ibsen they had gathered from a short article of mine which I had had the forethought to circulate among them in proof. Here are a few of their utterances, taken almost at random from half-a-dozen of the leading papers :—

"The programme of yesterday had the peculiarity of introducing both a play and an author entirely new to England. Of the latter, a gentleman named Henrik Ibsen, it will be as well first to speak. . . . This is a fairly strong story, but its treatment, when not spasmodic, is apt to be too diffuse."

"The play was well acted throughout, but it was none the less insufferably gloomy and ponderous."

"It is a powerful and original work, blending with a healthy and touching moral some strong and well-deserved satire. . . . It needs, however, considerable alteration before it can reach the general public, even if it be not beyond the comprehension of any but an educated audience."

"Extremely fine comedy it is, and we shall be glad to know more of its author's workmanship."

"To cut this stupid story short, the child is saved, and the rogue, finding the game is up, deceives himself into the belief that he is remorseful. . . . The cynicism of Mr. Ibsen's play is likely to prove revolting to English ideas."

"The specimen of Ibsen's dramatic powers, now for the first time brought before the British public, is a work of no common order. To fit it thoroughly to English taste would require considerable pains. Though constructed with extreme ingenuity

and conforming to every most rigid canon of dramatic workmanship, it admits lengthy explanation and diffuse dialogue. . . . The fate with which the hero is menaced has something of the grandeur and the irony of Greek tragedy. Of the great dramatic gifts, indeed, so far as can be judged from a single play, one only is wanting from the Norwegian poet. Ibsen shows little command of character."

"Either Scandinavian playgoers are clearer-headed than English ones, or else Ibsen must risk much with the tiresome genealogical puzzle which eventually swamps his main plot altogether."

"There are sundry allusions to the superior honesty and virtue of the Norwegian as opposed to members of other and more splendid communities, which would doubtless have a finer effect on the national stage than in the theatres of London."

It seems almost incredible that any one should have been blind to the irony of these "allusions"; but in English dramatic criticism it is the incredible that always happens. Not a single critic failed to remark that the dialogue, which had, as a matter of fact, been ruthlessly cut down, was redundant and diffuse; and I was blamed, as the above extracts show, not for having adapted the play at all, but for not having adapted it enough.

Nine years passed. Miss Ray's translation of *Emperor and Galilean*, Miss Lord's translation of *A Doll's House*, the "Camelot Classics" volume containing *Pillars of Society*, *Ghosts*, and *An Enemy of the People*, were published; and in June 1889, the famous production of *A Doll's House* took place at the Novelty Theatre. Mrs. Oscar Beringer was at that time manageress of the Opera Comique theatre, where her daughter, Miss Vera Beringer, had been distinguishing herself in *Little Lord*

Fauntleroy. It was proposed that this young lady should have a benefit; and *Pillars of Society* suggested itself as a desirable play, because Ibsen was the topic of the hour and Olaf was a part for Miss Beringer. The original scheme was to reproduce my adaptation of 1880; but this I decidedly vetoed. The play was produced as Ibsen wrote it, except for a few quite unimportant cuts. One of them was made by the Censor (the late Mr. Pigott), who, in his sagacity, objected to the lines:—

MRS. RUMMEL. And there he found—no, really I don't think I can tell you.

MRS. HOLT. Why, you know, Mrs. Rummel, he found nothing, for the door was locked on the inside.

Mr. Vernon resumed his original part of Bernick, and, for the rest, the playbill ran as follows:—

OPERA COMIQUE THEATRE.
Under the Management of Mrs. OSCAR BERINGER.

MISS VERA BERINGER'S BENEFIT MATINÉE.
Production (for the first time in England), under the direction of Mr. W. H. VERNON, of

THE PILLARS OF SOCIETY,

A Play in Four Acts by HENRIK IBSEN.
Translated from the Norwegian by WILLIAM ARCHER.
The following Artists have kindly consented to appear:—

Consul Bernick - - - - - Mr. W. H. VERNON
Johan Tönnesen (Mrs. Bernick's younger brother) - - - Mr. J. G. GRAHAME
Dr. Rörlund (Assistant Master at the Grammar School) - - Mr. JOHN BEAUCHAMP

Hilmar Tönnesen (Mrs. Bernick's cousin) - Mr. E. HENDRIE
Aune (Foreman in the Consul's Shipbuilding Yard) - - - Mr. A. WOOD
Kraft (the Consul's Clerk) - - - - Mr. G. CANNINGE
Mr. Rummel, Mr. Sandstad, Mr. Vigeland } (Merchants) - - { Mr. E. SMART, Mr. GIRARDOT, Mr. BRANSCOMBE
Olaf, their Son (a boy of thirteen)[1] - Miss VERA BERINGER
Mrs. Bernick (his Wife) - - - - Mrs. DAWES
Martha Bernick (the Consul's Sister) - - Miss ROBINS
Dina Dorf (a young girl living in the Consul's House) - - Miss ANNIE IRISH
Mrs. Rummel - - - - Miss FANNY ROBERTSON
Mrs. Postmaster Holt - - - - - Miss ST. ANGE
Mrs. Dr. Lynge - - - - - Miss M. A. GIFFARD
Miss Rummel - - - - - Miss MAY BERINGER
Miss Holt - - - - - - - Miss BRÆKSTAD
Lona Hessel (Mrs. Bernick's elder step-sister) - - - MISS GENEVIEVE WARD

Townspeople.

The action takes place in Consul Bernick's House in a Small Town on the Norwegian Coast.

AFTER THE PLAY
MRS. KENDAL
Will Recite (for the only time this Season) "OSTLER JOE."

MME. ANTOINETTE STERLING
Has kindly consented to sing "THE THREE FISHERS."

The performance had been rather hastily prepared, and suffered a good deal from the shallowness of the

[1] This and the following line are exactly reproduced from the original document.

Opera Comique stage. Nevertheless, Mr. Vernon's Bernick and Miss Ward's Lona were much applauded, while Miss Elizabeth Robins, in the part of Martha, made the first marked success of her English career. The press, as usual, rose nobly to the occasion :—

"*The Pillars of Society* is a clever social satire, and reads like a play of intense interest, its literary merits blinding the student to its dramatic barrenness."

"Dramatic, in an accepted sense, the play is not, and it might almost be suspected that the author goes out of his way to avoid theatrical effect."

"After the play Mrs. Kendal recited, as only she can recite, *Ostler Joe*, and evidently moved some of her hearers more deeply than they had been moved by the whole four acts of *The Pillars of Society*."

"If Ibsen wished to be anything rather than dramatic he is entitled to congratulations on the result of his endeavours."

"There are many details full of interest and character, and altogether *The Pillars of Society* is a play of infinitely higher merit than *A Doll's House*. It deals with humanity on a larger scale and with loftier motives."

One critic, in an influential paper, began his article as follows :—"Now that Norwegian Socialism in connection with the drama is attracting a good deal of attention owing to the discussions created by the recent production of Ibsen's *Doll's House* in English, it is not surprising that the opportunity should be taken to present another of the numerous works of the same writer on the stage." Where this gentleman discovered Socialism in *Pillars of Society*, or for that matter in *A Doll's House* either, must for ever remain a mystery; but several of his colleagues took up the catchword, and Ibsen was for years writ down a "determined Socialist." This is a typical ex-

ample of the critical intelligence brought to bear upon his works.

I do not give the names of the papers in which these criticisms appeared, for it seems to me that there ought to be a Statute of Limitations for critical ineptitudes, and that it is inhuman, after all these years, to bring a critic individually to book for hasty errors, to which, indeed, faults of translation or of representation no doubt contributed. It is not my fault that the style of the following extract should defeat my conciliatory intention, and stamp it with the author's sign-manual:—

"The zeal of the Ibsenites has outrun their discretion. They believe that 'the master' is too sacred to be touched; they prate and wag their serious heads over 'Ibsen's gospel': they picture him as an evangelist rather than as a practical, common-sense, business dramatist. They would not alter a comma, cross a 't,' or dot an 'i' of his inspired work; and the consequence is that an audience of average intellect, instead of being honestly pleased, excited, and stimulated, is profoundly bored and necessarily depressed.

"A sensible stage-manager would have made short work of Ibsen's always thoughtful, always earnest, text. It may do very well for Norway or Sweden or Berlin or Scandinavia or the Fatherland, but unfortunately it does not do unedited for England. . . . In distant Scandinavia and long-winded Germany they may love this interminable talk; they may love to sit over it as they do over their 'beer parliaments' and 'coffee scandals'; but here we like to come to the point; here there is no time to cut anything to waste; here we must come to Hecuba, 'cut the cackle and come to the 'osses.' It is sad that it should be so, but so it is.

". . . We arise from a perusal in the study of *The Pillars of Society* with a profound belief in its dramatic excellence. The more the dramatist talks the more we like him. He cannot

talk too much in the study. He is a companion and a friend. We are attached to Lona, and admire her spirit and self-sacrifice. We can feel every beat of Consul Bernick's heart, understand his temptations, appreciate his mental agony. We picture Martha as one of the loveliest characters in dramatic fiction—a noble woman rightly planned, and so she is because the author built her so. We picture the scene; we have lived in the 'community'; every human being on the canvas is familiar to us. We arise from the book excited, impressed, our imagination tingling; the whole thing transparent, clear, convincing. But what a difference when we arise from the contemplation of the play! The whole thing is altered, deformed, misrepresented, debased, not from any fault of the actors, but simply because the literary dramatist has not thoroughly mastered the *technique* of the stage. . . . The people filed out into the wet Strand perplexed, half-weary, astonished, impressed, but as yet not wholly converted to Ibsen, even at his best. They could not quite understand the 'communities,' and the society chatter, and the ceaseless allusions to the *Indian Girl*, the *Palm Tree*, and the alliteratively-named Dina Dorf. In fact, one of the audience, earnest and anxious for conversion, was found playing with her fingers in the passages, and babbling, in memory of childhood's days:

'Ina, Dina, Dina Dorf,
Kattler Wheeler, Wila Worf';

and even Ibsen himself would not understand this reminiscence of the British nursery!"

One can only say, with Mr. Penley in the farce, "What badinage! What persiflage!"

The first performance of *Pillars of Society* in America took place in German at Amberg's (now the Irving Place) Theatre, New York, on December 26th, 1889, with Ernest Possart, of Munich, as Bernick, Frl. Christien as

Mrs. Bernick, and Frl. Leithner as Lona. Not till more than a year later (March 1891) was it presented in English, and then two performances took place within three days of each other. The first and most important was given by the pupils of Mr. Franklin Sargent's admirably conducted "Academy of the Dramatic Arts." The playbill ran as follows:—

LYCEUM THEATRE.

New York Theatre Co. - - Proprietors.
Daniel Frohman - - - - Manager.

This (Friday) afternoon, March 6, at two o'clock,
Special Matinée by GRADUATES OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF THE DRAMATIC ARTS,
in aid of the "GRADUATES SCHOLARSHIP FUND."
First Performance in America (in English) of

THE PILLARS OF SOCIETY.

CHARACTERS.

Consul Bernick - - - - GEORGE D. FAWCETT
Mrs. Bernick (his wife) - - Miss KATHERINE ARNOLD[1]
Olaf (their son, a boy of 13) - Miss STELLA KENNEY[1]
Miss Bernick (Martha, the Consul's sister) Miss MAUDE BANKS
Johan Tönnesen (Mrs. Bernick's younger brother) FOSTER PLATT
Miss Hessel (Lona, her elder stepsister) Miss ALICE FISCHER
Hilmar Tönnesen (Mrs. Bernick's cousin) - R. O. JENKINS
Rector Rörlund - - - - WALTER C. BELLOWS
Rummel (a merchant) - - - ARTHUR J. HAYDEN[1]
Vigeland (a merchant) - - - CHARLES ROBINSON
Sandstad (a merchant) - - - HOWARD MORGAN
Dina Dorf (a young girl living in the Consul's house) - -
Miss BESSIE TYREE

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[1] Members of the Senior Class of the Academy.

Kraft (the Consul's clerk) - - - PERCY WEST
Shipbuilder Aune - - - - - THOMAS OBERLE
Townspeople and others, by members of the Junior Class of the Academy.

The action of the play takes place in Consul Bernick's house, in a small Norwegian coast-town.

The play presented under the auspices of the American Academy of the Dramatic Arts.
Franklin H. Sargent - - - Director.

The American press, if not more appreciative than the English, was more vivacious in its comments. Here are a few pronouncements:—

"Ibsen's work is rugged and picturesque, and by no means so heavy in action as many supposed."

"*The Pillars of Society* has one effective scene. . . . For the rest, the work is verbose and tiresome. . . . In our humble opinion Ibsen is the veriest tyro in the art of play-writing. His pieces are sermons written in dramatic form, but lacking dramatic elements and the quality of dramatic expression. . . . Even the wildest of Ibsen faddists cannot fail to vote him an intolerable bore when he is acted."

"The social evils which Ibsen assails are as old as the hills, and all his grave lectures upon them, the ponderous platitudes which are accepted by his disciples as something in the nature of inspired revelation, will not make them new or universal. . . . The question is whether rather stale essays on social reform are dramatic in their character. . . . Mr. Ibsen evidently has a fine sense of character and of situation, but either knows or cares very little about the art of construction."

"No sufficient reason is apparent why any of Henrik Ibsen's known plays should get time and space on any stage. . . . The work possesses by itself small merit of entertainment, of moral lesson, of literary excellence, or of dramatic force."

"Ibsen, as a fad of the amusing sort of persons who call themselves 'thinking men,' is, of course, a little ridiculous. Ibsen, as a writer of original ideas or of extraordinary theatrical deftness, does not exist. But Ibsen as a dramatist of power and truth, who elects to be a preacher of platitudes vitalised by forcible human experience, is interesting."

"There is a sweet, fresh tale of love woven into this recital of a man's struggle with his conscience. It is the idyllic tale of Johan and Dina Dorf, of a generous young fellow and a simple girl who longs passionately for a freer air, a freer world. There are other characters." [Here the article ends.]

"It seems incredible that at a time when we are nauseated with drawing-room inanities, written in the interest of Worth and Pariset, this vital drama, with its noble theme, its superb language, and its benign dénouement, should have been left in the background. Yet it is not incredible after all. *The Pillars of Society* deals with men and women. That is enough to frighten us. We want puppets and dummies, and we get them all the time, goodness knows."

"The play is verbose, and its moral obtruded to the extent of didacticism. There is not a ray of humour anywhere discernible in it, and the voluminous gravity of the author expends itself on the narrowness and bigotry of a provincial set. . . . Society in the neighbourhood of this play is obviously rotten to the core. Henrik Ibsen, I suspect, entertains a thoroughly Bohemian theory with regard to its regeneration. He brings back a woman who never could submit to the restrictions of social life, but who travels with a circus, and has a clear, natural sense of the eternal verities."

"The general impression was complicated and funereal."

"Like a breeze from a Western prairie, Miss Alice Fischer came upon the scene as Lorna (*sic*). Sunshine she seemed to bring with her, to relieve the gloom of her surroundings. The patriotic sentiments given her to utter awoke quick responses in her sympathetic hearers, manifested by applause given often at

inopportune moments. . . Not all the audience were Ibsenites. One witty little Philistine, at the close of the second act, murmured 'This is like a Philadelphia Sunday.'"

I shall have many gems of Ibsen criticism to present in my Introductions to other plays, but I can promise nothing more exquisite than the description of Lona Hessel as a lady "who travels with a circus and has a clear natural sense of the eternal verities."

On Monday, March 9th, 1891, *Pillars of Society* was performed at the Harlem Opera House, New York, by the so-called Hammerstein Stock Company. The cast was as follows :—

Bernick	J. B. STUDLEY
Mrs. Bernick	CONSTANCE HAMBLIN
Olaf	IDELLA MACDONELL
Martha	CLARA BAKER RUST
Johan Tönnesen	ROBERT HILLIARD
Lona Hessel	HENRIETTA VADERS
Hilmar Tönnesen	W. T. MELVILLE
Rector Rörlund	ALEXIS MARKHAM
Rummel	E. H. STEVENS
Vigeland	ROYAL ROCHE
Sandstad	E. SOLDENE POWELL
Dina Dorf	IDA VAN SICLEN
Krap	EDWIN BELKNAP
Aune	T. L. OTTOMEYER
Mrs. Rummel	Mrs. CHARLES EDMUNDS
Mrs. Holt	Mrs. CHARLES T. PETERS
Mrs. Lynge	HATTIE BALLEY
Hilda Rummel	MAUD MAREAU
Netta Holt	Miss ELMIRA

Of this production no particulars have reached me. It is reported to have been "grotesque," but "well received."

Pillars of Society was performed by amateurs at the Columbia Theatre, Boston, April 16th, 1895, under the direction of Mrs. Erving Winslow, who has given frequent readings of this and other plays in the chief cities of the United States. Many performances of the play in German have taken place in Chicago, Milwaukee, and elsewhere; but of them I have no definite account.

In Paris *Les Soutiens de la Société* was produced by M. Lugné-Poë's organisation, L'Œuvre, at the Nouveau Théâtre, June 23rd, 1896, with Rameau as Bernick, Lugné-Poë as Johan, Madame Renée Cogé as Lona, and Mlle. Régine Martial as Martha. Francisque Sarcey said of it, justly enough, "This play is certainly one of the least considerable of the Norwegian master. It is built like those of Adolphe d'Ennery." He then added, "But the hand of the workman is much less adroit"—a remark which is perhaps partly accounted for by the fact that he evidently saw the play through the mist of a defective translation and somewhat eccentric performance. Curiously enough, he reserves his chief praise for the "finely conceived and superbly executed dénouement." The scene of Bernick's confession, he says, "a de l'allure; elle est d'un effet saisissant et plaît par je ne sais quel air de folie grandiose." An effect of grandiose madness was certainly not that at which Ibsen aimed. A remark in M. Jules Lemaître's notice may be taken as explaining where the madness came in. He writes :—

"Admire the pious impiety of M. Lugné-Poë. He has not feared to lay hands on Ibsen, in order to make Ibsen more conformable with himself. He evidently thought the end of the

play too clear, too satisfying, too cynically optimistic, not Ibsenish enough. He said to himself:—'This ignoble dénouement after the manner of Scribe is evidently an error on the part of our old Henrik. Let us obscure this dishonouring perspicuity; let us veil this obscene optimism. Let us insert something vague, indefinite, unfinished, incomprehensible.'"

Accordingly, says M. Lemaître, he omitted all mention of the stopping of the *Indian Girl* and the rescue of Olaf, leaving the audience to suppose that Bernick recovered his spirits and made his confession while still believing that Olaf and the American sailors had gone to their death. This cannot possibly have been an intentional alteration; it must have proceeded from some error in the performance, some failure to make an entrance or to take a cue; but whatever the reason, it cannot but have produced the effect of lunacy which M. Sarcey admired. M. Lemaître, for the rest, gives a clear, cool, and judicial account of the play, ending as follows:—

"Dans ce drame de conception claire et d'exécution embrouillé, il y a de tout: les germes de beaucoup d'idées que le grand poète développera plus tard, le premier crayon de la plupart des types qu'il affectionnera, et déjà, pour tout dire, l'âme candide et pure, et rêveuse et raisonneuse à la fois, de Henrik Ibsen."

One other production completes the European record of *Pillars of Society* so far as it is known to me—a production in Italian at the Teatro Valle, Rome, in January, 1893. The play is said to have been acted both in South Africa and in Australia; but of these performances I have no details.

The Norwegian title, *Samfundets Stötter*, means

literally *Society's Pillars.* In the text the word "Samfund" has sometimes been translated "society," sometimes "community." The noun "Stötte," a pillar, has for its correlative the verb "at stötte," to support; so that the English phrase, "to support society," represents the Norwegian "at stötte Samfundet." The reader may bear in mind, then, that this phrase is, in the original, a direct allusion to the title of the play. Rörlund, in the original, is an "Adjunkt" or assistant master, second in command to the "Rector" of a school. In former editions I called him "Rector," using that word in its Scottish sense of Headmaster, which survives at Oxford. I found, however, that English readers and audiences could not dissociate the word "Rector" from the idea of a beneficed clergyman; so that in this edition, to avoid the ambiguity, I have given him the non-committal degree of "Dr." Rörlund. Bernick's title of "Consul" seems to have puzzled a good many English readers. In Norwegian sea-ports, leading citizens very often become "Consuls" for one or other foreign power; and as the use of every possible title is traditional in Norway, these "Consuls" are always addressed by that name. Bernick may possibly have been British consul—more probably Dutch or French. My own grandfather was British Consul in just such a town as Ibsen here describes; and people who knew him speak of him to this day as "the old Consul."

LONDON,
December 31*st*, 1900.

PILLARS OF SOCIETY.

(1877.)

CHARACTERS

CONSUL BERNICK.
MRS. BERNICK, *his wife.*
OLAF, *their son, a boy of thirteen.*
MISS BERNICK [MARTHA], *the Consul's sister.*
JOHAN TÖNNESEN, *Mrs. Bernick's younger brother.*
MISS HESSEL [LONA], *her elder step-sister.*
HILMAR TÖNNESEN, *Mrs. Bernick's cousin.*
DOCTOR RÖRLUND, *a schoolmaster.*
RUMMEL, VIGELAND, SANDSTAD, } *Merchants.*
DINA DORF, *a young girl living in the Consul's house.*
KRAP, *the Consul's chief clerk.*
AUNE, *a foreman shipbuilder.*
MRS. RUMMEL.
MRS. POSTMASTER HOLT.
MRS. DOCTOR LYNGE.
MISS RUMMEL.
MISS HOLT.

Townspeople and others, foreign sailors, steam-boat passengers, etc.

The action takes place in Consul Bernick's house, in a small Norwegian seaport.

Pronunciation of Names: Rörlund = Rörloond; Dina = Deena; Rummel = Roomel; Vigeland = Veeghëland; Aune = Ownë; Lynge = Lynghë. The modified "ö" is pronounced much as in German.

PILLARS OF SOCIETY.

PLAY IN FOUR ACTS.

ACT FIRST.

A spacious garden-room in CONSUL BERNICK'S *house. In front, to the left, a door leads into the Consul's office; farther back, in the same wall, a similar door. In the middle of the opposite wall is a large entrance-door. The back wall is almost entirely composed of plate-glass, with an open doorway leading to a broad flight of steps,*[1] *over which a sun-shade is let down. Beyond the steps a part of the garden can be seen, enclosed by a railing with a little gate. Beyond the railing, and running parallel with it, is a street of small brightly-painted wooden houses. It is summer, and the sun shines warmly. Now and then people pass along the street: they stop*

[1] "Havetrappe" here seems to imply a flight of steps with so wide a landing at the top as practically to form a veranda, under the sun-shade. In subsequent stage directions, the word is rendered by "veranda."

and speak to each other: customers come and go at the little corner shop, and so forth.

[*In the garden-room a number of ladies are gathered round a table. At the head of the table sits* MRS. BERNICK. *On her left sit* MRS. HOLT *and her daughter; next to them,* MRS. *and* MISS RUMMEL. *On* MRS. BERNICK'S *right sit* MRS. LYNGE, MISS BERNICK (MARTHA), *and* DINA DORF. *All the ladies are busy sewing. On the table lie large heaps of half-finished and cut-out linen, and other articles of clothing. Farther back, at a little table on which are two flower-pots and a glass of* eau sucré, *sits* DOCTOR RÖRLUND, *reading from a book with gilt edges, a word here and there being heard by the audience. Out in the garden* OLAF BERNICK *is running about, shooting at marks with a crossbow.*]

[*Presently* AUNE, *the foreman shipbuilder, enters quietly by the door on the right. The reading ceases for a moment;* MRS. BERNICK *nods to him and points to the left-hand door.* AUNE *goes quietly to the Consul's door, knocks softly, pauses a moment, then knocks again.* KRAP, *the Consul's clerk, opens the door and comes out with his hat in his hand and papers under his arm.*]

KRAP.

Oh, it's you knocking?

AUNE.

The Consul sent for me.

KRAP.

Yes; but he can't see you just now; he has commissioned me——

AUNE.

You? I'd a deal sooner——

KRAP.

——commissioned me to tell you this: You must stop these Saturday lectures to the workmen.

AUNE.

Indeed? I sort of thought my free time was my own to——

KRAP.

Not to make the men useless in work-time. Last Saturday you must needs hold forth about the harm that will be done to the workmen by our machines and new method of work. What makes you do that?

AUNE.

I do it to support society.

KRAP.

That's an odd notion! The Consul says you are undermining society.

AUNE.

My "society" is not the Consul's "society," Mr. Krap! Seeing as I'm the foreman of the Industrial Society, I have to——

KRAP.

Your first duty is as foreman of Consul Bernick's shipyard. Your first duty is to the society called Bernick & Co., for by it we all live.—Well, now you know what the Consul wanted to say to you.

AUNE.

The Consul wouldn't have said it like that, Mr. Krap! But I know well enough what I've got to thank for this. It's that cursëd American that has put in for repairs. These people think work can be done here as they do it over there, and that——

KRAP.

Well, well—I have no time to go into generalities. I have told you the Consul's wishes, and that is enough. Now you had better go down to the yard again; you're sure to be wanted; I shall be down myself presently.—I beg your pardon, ladies!

[*He bows, and goes out through the garden and down the street.* AUNE *goes quietly out to the right.* DOCTOR RÖRLUND, *who during the whole of the foregoing conversation has continued reading, presently closes the book with a bang.*]

RÖRLUND.

There, my dear ladies, that is the end.

MRS. RUMMEL.

Oh, what an instructive tale!

Mrs. Holt.

And so moral!

Mrs. Bernick.

Such a book really gives one a great deal to think over.

Rörlund.

Yes; it forms a refreshing contrast to what we unhappily see every day, both in newspapers and magazines. The rouged and gilded exterior flaunted by the great communities—what does it really conceal? Hollowness and rottenness, if I may say so. They have no moral foundation under their feet. In one word—they are whited sepulchres, these great communities of the modern world.

Mrs. Holt.

Too true! too true!

Mrs. Rummel.

We have only to look at the crew of the American ship that's lying out there.

Rörlund.

Oh, I won't speak of such scum of humanity. But even in the higher classes—how do matters stand? Doubt and fermenting unrest on every side; the soul at war with itself; insecurity in every relation of life. See how the family is undermined!—how a brazen spirit of subversion is assailing the most vital truths!

Dina.

[*Without looking up.*] But many great things are done there too, are they not?

Rörlund.

Great things——? I don't understand——

Mrs. Holt.

[*Astonished.*] Good heavens, Dina——!

Mrs. Rummel.

[*At the same time.*] Oh, Dina, how can you?

Rörlund.

It would scarcely be for our good if such "great things" came into fashion among us. No; we ought to thank God that our lot is ordered as it is. A tare, alas! will now and then spring up among the wheat; but we honestly do our best to weed it out. The great point, ladies, is to keep society pure—to exclude from it all the questionable elements which an impatient age would force upon us.

Mrs. Holt.

Ah, there's more than enough of that sort of thing, unfortunately.

Mrs. Rummel.

Yes; last year we only escaped the railway by a hair's-breadth.

MRS. BERNICK.

Karsten managed to put a stop to that.

RÖRLUND.

Providentially, Mrs. Bernick! You may be sure your husband was an instrument in a higher hand when he refused to support that scheme.

MRS. BERNICK.

And yet the papers said such horrid things about him! But we are quite forgetting to thank you, my dear Doctor. It is really more than kind of you to sacrifice so much of your time to us.

RÖRLUND.

Oh, not at all; in holiday-time, you know——

MRS. BERNICK.

Yes, yes; but it's a sacrifice, nevertheless.

RÖRLUND.

[*Drawing his chair nearer.*] Pray don't speak of it, dear lady. Do not all of you make sacrifices for a good cause? And do you not make them willingly and gladly? The Lapsed and Lost, for whom we are working, are like wounded soldiers on a battle-field; you, ladies, are the Red Cross Guild, the sisters of mercy, who pick lint for these unhappy sufferers, tie the bandages gently round the wounds, dress, and heal them——

Mrs. Bernick.

It must be a great blessing to see everything in so beautiful a light.

Rörlund.

The gift is largely inborn; but it can in some measure be acquired. The great point is to see things in the light of a serious vocation. What do you say, Miss Bernick? Do you not find that you have, as it were, firmer ground under your feet since you have devoted your life to your school-work?

Martha.

I scarcely know what to say. Often, when I am pent up in the school-room, I wish I were far out upon the stormy sea.

Rörlund.

Yes, yes; that is temptation, my dear Miss Bernick. You must bar the door against such an unquiet guest. The stormy sea—of course you do not mean that literally; you mean the great billowing world, where so many go to wreck. And do you really find so much to attract you in the life you hear rushing and surging outside? Just look out into the street. Look at the people in the sweltering sunshine, toiling and moiling over their paltry affairs! Ours, surely, is the better part, sitting here in the pleasant shade, and turning our backs toward the quarter from which disturbance might arise.

Martha.

Yes, no doubt you are quite right——

RÖRLUND.

And in a house like this—in a good and pure home, where the Family is seen in its fairest shape—where peace and unity reign—— [*To* MRS. BERNICK.] What are you listening to, Mrs. Bernick?

MRS. BERNICK.

[*Who has turned towards the door of the Consul's room.*] How loud they are talking in there!

RÖRLUND.

Is anything particular going on?

MRS. BERNICK.

I don't know. There is evidently some one with my husband.

[HILMAR TÖNNESEN, *with a cigar in his mouth, comes in by the door on the right, but stops on seeing so many ladies.*]

HILMAR.

Oh, I beg your pardon—— [*Turning to go.*]

MRS. BERNICK.

Come in, Hilmar, come in; you are not disturbing us. Do you want anything?

HILMAR.

No, I just happened to be passing. Good morning, ladies. [*To* MRS. BERNICK.] Well, what is going to come of it?

Mrs. Bernick.

Of what?

Hilmar.

You know Bernick has called a cabinet council.

Mrs. Bernick.

Indeed! What is it about?

Hilmar.

Oh, this railway nonsense again.

Mrs. Rummel.

No! Is it possible?

Mrs. Bernick.

Poor Karsten—is he to have all that worry over again——?

Rörlund.

Why, what can be the meaning of this, Mr. Tönnesen? Consul Bernick gave it plainly to be understood last year that he would have no railway here.

Hilmar.

Yes, I thought so too; but I met Krap just now, and he told me the railway question was to the fore again, and that Bernick was holding a conference with three of our capitalists.

Mrs. Rummel.

I was certain I heard Rummel's voice.

HILMAR.

Yes, Mr. Rummel is there, of course, and Sandstad and Michael Vigeland—"Holy Michael," as they call him.

RÖRLUND.

Hm——

HILMAR.

I beg your pardon, Doctor.

MRS. BERNICK.

Just when everything was so nice and quiet too!

HILMAR.

Well, for my part, I shouldn't mind their beginning their bickerings again. It would be a variety at least.

RÖRLUND.

I think we can dispense with that sort of variety.

HILMAR.

It depends upon one's constitution. Some natures crave for a Titanic struggle now and then. But there's no room for that sort of thing in our petty provincial life, and it's not every one that can—— [*Turning over the leaves of Rörlund's book.*] "Woman as the Servant of Society"—what rubbish is this?

MRS. BERNICK.

Oh, Hilmar, you mustn't say that. You have surely not read the book.

Hilmar.

No, and don't intend to.

Mrs. Bernick.

You seem out of sorts to-day.

Hilmar.

Yes, I am.

Mrs. Bernick.

Perhaps you didn't sleep well last night?

Hilmar.

No, I slept very badly. I went a walk yesterday evening, by my doctor's orders. Then I turned in to the club, and read an account of a polar expedition. There is something bracing in watching men at war with the elements.

Mrs. Rummel.

But it doesn't seem to have agreed with you, Mr. Tönnesen?

Hilmar.

No, it didn't agree with me at all. I lay tossing all night half asleep, and dreamt I was being chased by a horrible walrus.

Olaf.

[*Who has come up the garden steps.*] Have you been chased by a walrus, Uncle?

HILMAR.

I dreamt it, little stupid! Do you still go on playing with that ridiculous bow? Why don't you get hold of a proper gun?

OLAF.

Oh, I should love to, but——

HILMAR.

There would be some sense in a gun; the very act of pulling the trigger braces your nerves.

OLAF.

And then I could shoot bears, Uncle. But father won't let me.

MRS. BERNICK.

You really must not put such ideas into his head, Hilmar.

HILMAR.

Ha—there we have the rising generation nowadays! Goodness knows there's plenty of talk about pluck and daring, but it all ends in play; no one has any real craving for the discipline that lies in looking danger manfully in the face. Don't stand and point at me with your bow, stupid; it might go off.

OLAF.

No, Uncle, there's no bolt in it.

HILMAR.

How do you know? There may very likely be

a bolt in it. Take it away, I tell you!—Why the deuce have you never gone to America in one of your father's ships? There you could go buffalo-hunting or fighting the red-skins.

Mrs. Bernick.

Oh, Hilmar——

Olaf.

I should like to very much, Uncle; and then perhaps I might meet Uncle Johan and Aunt Lona.

Hilmar.

Hm—don't talk nonsense.

Mrs. Bernick.

Now you can go down the garden again, Olaf.

Olaf.

Mayn't I go out into the street, mother?

Mrs. Bernick.

Yes; but take care not to go too far.

[Olaf *runs out through the garden gate.*]

Rörlund.

You ought not to put such notions into the child's head, Mr. Tönnesen.

Hilmar.

No, of course, he's to be a mere stick-in-the-mud, like so many others.

Rörlund.

Why do you not go to America yourself?

Hilmar.

I? With my complaint? Of course no one here has any consideration for that. But besides—one has duties towards the society one belongs to. There must be some one to hold high the banner of the ideal. Ugh, there he is shouting again!

The Ladies.

Who is shouting?

Hilmar.

Oh, I don't know. They are talking rather loud in there, and it makes me so nervous.

Mrs. Rummel.

It is my husband you hear, Mr. Tönnesen; you must remember he is so accustomed to addressing great assemblies——

Rörlund.

The others are not whispering either, it seems to me.

Hilmar.

No, sure enough, when it's a question of keeping the purse-strings tight——; everything here ends in paltry material calculations. Ugh!

Mrs. Bernick.

At least that is better than it used to be, when everything ended in dissipation.

MRS. LYNGE.

Were things really so bad as all that?

MRS. RUMMEL.

They were as bad as bad could be, Mrs. Lynge. You may thank your stars that you didn't live here then.

MRS. HOLT.

Yes, there has certainly been a great change! When I think of the time when I was a girl——

MRS. RUMMEL.

Oh, you needn't go back more than fourteen or fifteen years—heaven help us, what a life people led! There was a dancing club and a music club——

MARTHA.

And the dramatic club—I remember it quite well.

MRS. RUMMEL.

Yes; it was there your play was acted, Mr. Tönnesen.

HILMAR.

[*At the back.*] Oh, nonsense——!

RÖRLUND.

Mr. Tönnesen's play?

MRS. RUMMEL.

Yes; that was long before you came here, Doctor. Besides, it only ran one night.

MRS. LYNGE.

Wasn't it in that play you told me you played the heroine, Mrs. Rummel?

MRS. RUMMEL.

[*Glancing at* RÖRLUND.] I? I really don't remember, Mrs. Lynge. But I remember too well all the noisy gaiety that went on among families.

MRS. HOLT.

Yes; I actually know houses where two great dinner-parties were given in one week.

MRS. LYNGE.

And then there was a company of strolling actors, they tell me.

MRS. RUMMEL.

Yes, that was the worst of all——!

MRS. HOLT.

[*Uneasily.*] Hm, hm——

MRS. RUMMEL.

Oh, actors did you say? No, I remember nothing about them.

MRS. LYNGE.

Why, I was told they caused all sorts of trouble. What was it that really happened?

MRS. RUMMEL.

Oh, nothing at all, Mrs. Lynge.

MRS. HOLT.

Dina, dear, hand me that piece of linen, please.

MRS. BERNICK.

[*At the same time.*] Dina, my love, will you go and ask Katrina to bring in the coffee.

MARTHA.

I will go with you, Dina.

[DINA *and* MARTHA *go out by the second door on the left.*]

MRS. BERNICK.

[*Rising.*] And you must excuse me for a moment, ladies; I think we had better take our coffee outside.

[*She goes out to the veranda and begins arranging a table;* RÖRLUND *stands in the doorway talking to her.* HILMAR *sits outside smoking.*]

MRS. RUMMEL.

[*Softly.*] Oh dear, Mrs. Lynge, how you frightened me!

MRS. LYNGE.

I?

MRS. HOLT.

Ah, but you began it yourself, Mrs. Rummel.

MRS. RUMMEL.

I? Oh, how can you say so, Mrs. Holt? Not a single word passed my lips.

Mrs. Lynge.

But what is the matter?

Mrs. Rummel.

How could you begin to talk about——! Only think—didn't you see that Dina was in the room?

Mrs. Lynge.

Dina? Why, bless me! what has she to do with——?

Mrs. Holt.

Here, in this house, too! Don't you know that it was Mrs. Bernick's brother——?

Mrs. Lynge.

What about him? I know nothing at all; remember I am quite new to the town——

Mrs. Rummel.

Then you haven't heard that——? Hm—— [*To her daughter.*] You can go down the garden for a little while, Hilda.

Mrs. Holt.

You too, Netta. And be sure you are very kind to poor Dina when she comes.

[Miss Rummel *and* Miss Holt *go out into the garden.*]

Mrs. Lynge.

Well, what about Mrs. Bernick's brother?

Mrs. Rummel.

Don't you know, he was the hero of the scandal?

Mrs. Lynge.

Mr. Hilmar the hero of a scandal!

Mrs. Rummel.

Good heavens, no; Hilmar is her cousin, Mrs. Lynge. I am speaking of her brother——

Mrs. Holt.

The Prodigal Tönnesen——

Mrs. Rummel.

Johan was his name. He ran away to America.

Mrs. Holt.

Had to run away, you understand.

Mrs. Lynge.

Then the scandal was about him?

Mrs. Rummel.

Yes, it was a sort of—what shall I call it?—a sort of a—with Dina's mother. Oh, I remember it as if it were yesterday. Johan Tönnesen was in old Mrs. Bernick's office; Karsten Bernick had just come home from Paris—it was before his engagement——

Mrs. Lynge.

Yes, but the scandal——?

Mrs. Rummel.

Well, you see, that winter Möller's comedy company was in the town——

Mrs. Holt.

——and in the company were Dorf and his wife. All the young men were mad about her.

Mrs. Rummel.

Yes, heaven knows what they could see in her. But one evening Dorf came home very late——

Mrs. Holt.

——and quite unexpectedly——

Mrs. Rummel.

And there he found—no, really I don't think I can tell you.

Mrs. Holt.

Why, you know, Mrs. Rummel, he found nothing, for the door was locked on the inside.

Mrs. Rummel.

Yes; that's what I say—he found the door locked. And—only think!—some one inside had to jump out of the window.

Mrs. Holt.

Right from the attic window!

Mrs. Lynge.

And it was Mrs. Bernick's brother?

Mrs. Rummel.

Of course it was.

Mrs. Lynge.

And that was why he ran away to America?

Mrs. Holt.

He had to make himself scarce, I can assure you.

Mrs. Rummel.

For afterwards something else was found out, almost as bad. Only think, he had been making free with the cash-box——

Mrs. Holt.

But, after all, no one knows exactly about that, Mrs. Rummel; it may have been mere gossip.

Mrs. Rummel.

Well, I really must say——! Wasn't it known over the whole town? For that matter, wasn't old Mrs. Bernick on the point of going bankrupt? Rummel himself has told me that. But heaven forbid *I* should say anything!

Mrs. Holt.

Well, the money didn't go to Madam Dorf, at any rate, for she——

MRS. LYNGE.

Yes, what became of Dina's parents?

MRS. RUMMEL.

Oh, Dorf deserted both wife and child. But Madam was impudent enough to remain here a whole year. She didn't dare to show herself in the theatre again; but she made a living by washing and sewing——

MRS. HOLT.

And she tried to set up a dancing-school.

MRS. RUMMEL.

Of course it was a failure. What parents could trust their children with such a person? But she could not hold out long; the fine Madam wasn't accustomed to work, you see; her chest became affected, and she died.

MRS. LYNGE.

What a wretched story!

MRS. RUMMEL.

Yes, you may believe it has been a terrible thing for the Bernicks. It is the dark spot on the sun of their happiness, as Rummel once expressed it. So you must never talk of these things in this house again, Mrs. Lynge.

MRS. HOLT.

And, for heaven's sake, don't mention the step-sister either.

Mrs. Lynge.

Yes, by-the-bye, Mrs. Bernick has a step sister too?

Mrs. Rummel.

Used to have—fortunately; for now they don't recognise the relationship. Yes, she was a strange being! Would you believe it, she cut her hair short, and went about in rainy weather with men's shoes on!

Mrs. Holt.

And when her step-brother—the ne'er-do-well—had run away, and the whole town was of course crying out against him—what do you think she did? Why, she followed him.

Mrs. Rummel.

Yes, but think of the scandal before she left, Mrs. Holt!

Mrs. Holt.

Hush—don't talk about it.

Mrs. Lynge.

What, was there a scandal about her too?

Mrs. Rummel.

Yes, I'll tell you all about it, Mrs. Lynge. Bernick had just proposed to Betty Tönnesen; and as he was coming, with her on his arm, into her aunt's room to announce the engagement to her——

Mrs. Holt.

The Tönnesens were orphans, you understand.

Mrs. Rummel.

——Lona Hessel rose from her chair, and gave the handsome, aristocratic Karsten Bernick a ringing box on the ear!

Mrs. Lynge.

Well, I never——!

Mrs. Holt.

Yes, every one knows it.

Mrs. Rummel.

And then she packed up her traps and went off to America.

Mrs. Lynge.

She must have had designs upon him herself.

Mrs. Rummel.

Yes, that was just it. She imagined he was going to propose to her as soon as he came home from Paris.

Mrs. Holt.

Just fancy her dreaming of such a thing! Bernick —a polished young man of the world—a perfect gentleman—the darling of all the ladies——

Mrs. Rummel.

——and so high-principled, too, Mrs. Holt—so moral.

Mrs. Lynge.

Then what has become of this Miss Hessel in America?

Mrs. Rummel.

Well, you see, over that, as Rummel once expressed it, there rests a veil which should scarcely be lifted.

Mrs. Lynge.

What does that mean?

Mrs. Rummel.

Of course the family hears nothing from her now; but every one in town knows that she has sung for money in taverns over there——

Mrs. Holt.

——and has given lectures——

Mrs. Rummel.

——and has published an utterly crazy book.

Mrs. Lynge.

Is it possible——!

Mrs. Rummel.

Yes, Lona Hessel, too, is certainly a sun-spot in the Bernicks' happiness. But now you know the whole story, Mrs. Lynge. Heaven knows, I have only told it to put you on your guard as to what you say.

Mrs. Lynge.

You may be quite easy on that point. But poor Dina Dorf! I really feel very sorry for her.

Mrs. Rummel.

Oh, for her it was an absolute stroke of luck. Only think, if she had remained in her parents' hands! Of course we all took an interest in her, and tried to instil good principles into her mind. At last Miss Bernick arranged that she should come and live here.

Mrs. Holt.

But she has always been a difficult girl to deal with —the effect of bad example, you know. Of course she is not like one of our own children—we have to make the best of her, Mrs. Lynge.

Mrs. Rummel.

Hush, there she comes. [*Loud.*] Yes, as you say, Dina is really quite a clever girl. What, are you there, Dina? We are just finishing our work here.

Mrs. Holt.

Ah, how nice your coffee smells, my dear Dina. Such a cup of coffee in the forenoon——

Mrs. Bernick.

[*In the veranda.*] The coffee is ready, ladies.

[Martha *and* Dina *have meanwhile helped the servant to bring in the coffee things. All the ladies go out and sit down; they vie with each other in talking kindly to*

DINA. *After a time she comes into the room and looks for her sewing.*]

MRS. BERNICK.

[*Out at the coffee-table.*] Dina, don't you want——?

DINA.

No, thanks; I don't care for any.

[*She sits down to sew.* MRS. BERNICK *and* RÖRLUND *exchange a few words; a moment after, he comes into the room.*]

RÖRLUND.

[*Goes up to the table, as if looking for something, and says in a low voice.*] Dina.

DINA.

Yes.

RÖRLUND.

Why will you not come out?

DINA.

When I came with the coffee I could see by the strange lady's looks that they had been talking about me.

RÖRLUND.

And did you not see, too, how friendly she was with you?

DINA.

But that is what I can't bear.

RÖRLUND.

Yours is a rebellious nature, Dina.

DINA.

Yes.

RÖRLUND.

What makes it so?

DINA.

It has never been otherwise.

RÖRLUND.

But could you not try to change?

DINA.

No.

RÖRLUND.

Why not?

DINA.

[*Looks up at him.*] Because I belong to the "Lapsed and Lost."

RÖRLUND.

Fie, Dina!

DINA.

And so did my mother before me.

RÖRLUND.

Who has spoken to you of such things?

DINA.

No one; they never speak. Why don't they? They all handle me as gingerly as though I would fall to pieces, if—— Oh, how I hate all this good-heartedness!

RÖRLUND.

My dear Dina, I can very well understand that you must feel oppressed here, but——

DINA.

Oh, if I could only go far away! I could get on well enough by myself, if only I lived among people that weren't so—so——

RÖRLUND.

So what?

DINA.

So proper and moral.

RÖRLUND.

Come, Dina, you do not mean that.

DINA.

Oh, you know very well how I mean it. Every day Hilda and Netta come here that I may take example by them. I can never be as well-behaved as they are, and I will not be. Oh, if only I were far away, I daresay I could be good.

RÖRLUND.

You are good, my dear Dina.

DINA.

What good does that do me, here?

RÖRLUND.

Then you are seriously thinking of going away?

DINA.

I would not remain here a day longer, if you were not here.

RÖRLUND.

Tell me, Dina—what is it that really makes you like to be with me?

DINA.

You teach me so much that is beautiful.

RÖRLUND.

Beautiful? Do you call what I can teach you beautiful?

DINA.

Yes; or rather—you teach me nothing; but when I hear you speak, it makes me think of so much that is beautiful.

RÖRLUND.

What do you understand, then, by a beautiful thing?

DINA.

I have never thought of that.

Rörlund.

Then think of it now. What do you understand by a beautiful thing?

Dina.

A beautiful thing is something great—and far away.

Rörlund.

Hm.—My dear Dina, I sympathise with you from the bottom of my heart.

Dina.

Is that all?

Rörlund.

You know very well how unspeakably dear you are to me.

Dina.

If I were Hilda or Netta you would not be afraid to let any one see it.

Rörlund.

Oh, Dina, you cannot possibly realise the thousand considerations—— When a man is singled out as a moral pillar of the society he lives in, why—he cannot be too careful. If I were only sure that people would not misinterpret my motives—. But no matter; you must and shall be helped to rise. Dina, shall we make a bargain that when I come—when circumstances permit me to come—and say: Here is my hand—you will take it and be my wife?—Do you promise me that, Dina?

DINA.

Yes.

RÖRLUND.

Thank you, thank you!—Oh, Dina, I love you so—— Sh! some one is coming. Dina, for my sake—go out to the others.

[*She goes out to the coffee-table. At the same moment* RUMMEL, SANDSTAD, *and* VIGELAND *enter from the Consul's office, followed by* CONSUL BERNICK, *who has a bundle of papers in his hand.*]

BERNICK.

Then that matter is settled.

VIGELAND.

Yes, with the blessing of God, so let it be.

RUMMEL.

It is settled, Bernick! A Norseman's word stands firm as the Dovrefjeld, you know!

BERNICK.

And no one is to give in or fall away, whatever opposition we may meet with.

RUMMEL.

We stand or fall together, Bernick.

HILMAR.

[*Coming up from the garden.*] Excuse me, isn't it the railway that falls?

BERNICK.

On the contrary, it is to go ahead——

RUMMEL.

——full steam, Mr. Tönnesen.

HILMAR.

[*Coming forward.*] Indeed!

RÖRLUND.

What?

MRS. BERNICK.

[*At the door.*] My dear Karsten, what's the meaning——?

BERNICK.

Oh, my dear Betty, it can't possibly interest you. [*To the three men.*] Now we must get the prospectus ready; the sooner the better. Of course we four put our names down first. Our position in society renders it our duty to do as much as we can.

SANDSTAD.

No doubt, Consul.

RUMMEL.

We will make it go, Bernick; we are bound to.

BERNICK.

Oh, yes; I have no fear as to the result. We must work hard, each in his own circle; and if we can once point to a really lively interest in the affair among all classes of society, it follows that the Town, too, must contribute its share.

MRS. BERNICK.

Now, Karsten, you must really come and tell us——

BERNICK.

Oh, my dear Betty, ladies don't understand these things.

HILMAR.

Then you are actually going to back up the railway after all?

BERNICK.

Yes, of course.

RÖRLUND.

But last year, Consul——?

BERNICK.

Last year it was a different matter altogether. Then it was a coast line that was proposed——

VIGELAND.

——which would have been entirely superfluous, Doctor; for have we not steamboats?

SANDSTAD.

——and would have been outrageously expensive——

RUMMEL.

——yes, and would actually have interfered with important vested interests here in the town.

BERNICK.

The chief objection was that it would have conferred no benefit on the great mass of the community. Therefore I opposed it; and then the inland line was adopted.

HILMAR.

Yes, but that won't touch the towns about here.

BERNICK.

It will touch our town, my dear Hilmar, for we are going to build a branch line.

HILMAR.

Aha; an entirely new idea, then?

RUMMEL.

Yes; a magnificent idea, isn't it?

RÖRLUND.

Hm——

VIGELAND.

It cannot be denied that Providence seems specially to have smoothed the way for a branch line.

RÖRLUND.

Do you really say so, Mr. Vigeland?

BERNICK.

Yes, for my part, I cannot but regard it as a special guidance that sent me up country on business this spring, and led me by chance into a valley where I had never been before. It struck me like a flash of lightning that here was the very track for a branch line. I at once sent an engineer to inspect it; I have here the provisional calculations and estimates; nothing now stands in our way.

MRS. BERNICK.

[*Still standing, along with the other ladies, at the garden door.*] But, my dear Karsten, why have you kept all this so secret?

BERNICK.

Oh, my good Betty, you would not have seen the situation in its true light. Besides, I have spoken of it to no living creature until to-day. But now the decisive moment has come; now we must go to work openly, and with all our might. Ay, if I have to risk all I possess in the affair, I am determined to see it through.

RUMMEL.

So are we, Bernick; you may rely on us.

RÖRLUND.

Do you really expect such great results from this undertaking, gentlemen?

Bernick.

Yes, indeed we do. What a stimulus it will give to our whole community! Think of the great tracts of forest it will bring within reach; think of all the rich mineral-seams it will allow us to work; think of the river, with its one waterfall above the other! What rare advantages for manufactures of all kinds!

Rörlund.

And you have no fear that more frequent intercourse with a depraved outer world——

Bernick.

No; make your mind easy, Doctor. Our busy little town now rests, heaven be thanked, on a sound moral foundation; we have all helped to drain it, if I may say so; and that we will continue to do, each in his own way. You, Doctor, will carry on your beneficent activity in the school and in the home. We, the practical men of business, will support society by furthering the welfare of as wide a circle as possible. And our women—yes, come nearer, ladies; I am glad that you should hear—our women, I say, our wives and daughters, will proceed unwearied in their charitable labours, and be a help and comfort to those nearest and dearest to them, as my dear Betty and Martha are to me and Olaf—— [*Looks around.*] Why, where is Olaf to-day?

Mrs. Bernick.

Oh, in the holidays it's impossible to keep him at home.

Bernick.

Then he's certain to have gone down to the water again! You'll see, this will end in a misfortune.

Hilmar.

Bah—a little sport with the forces of nature——

Mrs. Rummel.

How nice it is of you to be so domestic, Mr. Bernick.

Bernick.

Ah, the Family is the kernel of society. A good home, upright and trusty friends, a little close-drawn circle, where no disturbing elements cast their shadow——

[Krap *enters from the right with letters and papers.*]

Krap.

The foreign mail, Consul—and a telegram from New York.

Bernick.

[*Taking it.*] Ah, from the owners of the *Indian Girl.*

Rummel.

Oh, the mail is in? Then you must excuse me——

Vigeland.

And me too.

Sandstad.

Good-bye, Consul.

BERNICK.

Good-bye, good-bye, gentlemen. And remember we have a meeting this afternoon at five o'clock.

THE THREE.

Yes—of course—all right. [*They go out to the right.*]

BERNICK.

[*Who has read the telegram.*] Well, this is really too American! Positively shocking——!

MRS. BERNICK.

Why, Karsten, what is it?

BERNICK.

Look here, Krap—read this!

KRAP.

[*Reads.*] "Fewest possible repairs; despatch *Indian Girl* without delay; good season: at worst, cargo will keep her afloat." Well, I must say——

BERNICK.

The cargo keep her afloat! These gentlemen know very well that, if anything should happen, that cargo will send her to the bottom like a stone.

RÖRLUND.

Ay, this shows the state of things in these vaunted great nations.

BERNICK.

You are right there—even human life counts for nothing when dollars are at stake. [*To* KRAP.] Can the *Indian Girl* be ready for sea in four or five days?

KRAP.

Yes, if Mr. Vigeland will agree to let the *Palm Tree* stand over in the meantime.

BERNICK.

Hm—he will scarcely agree to that. Oh, just look through the mail, please. By the way, did you see Olaf down on the pier?

KRAP.

No, Consul.

[*He goes into Consul's office.*]

BERNICK.

[*Looking again at the telegram.*] These gentlemen think nothing of risking the lives of eighteen men——

HILMAR.

Well, it's a sailor's calling to brave the elements. It must brace up your nerves to feel that you have only a thin plank between you and eternity——

BERNICK.

I should like to see the shipowner among us that would have the conscience for such a thing! There

isn't one, not a single one! [*Catches sight of* Olaf.] Ah, thank goodness, nothing has happened to him.

[Olaf, *with a fishing-line in his hand, comes running up the street and through the garden-gate.*]

Olaf.

[*Still in the garden.*] Uncle Hilmar, I've been down seeing the steamboat.

Bernick.

Have you been on the pier again?

Olaf.

No, I was only out in a boat. But just fancy, Uncle Hilmar, a whole circus company came ashore from the steamer, with horses and wild beasts; and there were a lot of passengers besides.

Mrs. Rummel.

Oh, are we to have a circus?

Rörlund.

We? Really I should hope not.

Mrs. Rummel.

No, of course not we, but——

Dina.

I should like to see a circus.

OLAF.

Oh, and me too.

HILMAR.

You're a little blockhead. What is there to see? Nothing but trickery and make-believe. Now it would be something worth while to see the Gaucho sweeping over the Pampas on his snorting mustang. But, hang it all, here in these little towns——

OLAF.

[*Pulling* MARTHA'S *dress.*] Aunt Martha, look, look—there they come!

MRS. HOLT.

Yes indeed, here we have them.

MRS. LYNGE.

Oh, what horrid people!

[*Many travellers, and a whole crowd of townspeople, come up the street.*]

MRS. RUMMEL.

Aren't they a regular set of mountebanks! Just look at that one in the grey dress, Mrs. Holt; the one with the knapsack on her back.

MRS. HOLT.

Yes, see, she has it slung on the handle of her parasol. Of course it's the manager's wife.

Mrs. Rummel.

Oh, and there's the manager himself, the one with the beard. Well, he does look a regular pirate. Don't look at him, Hilda!

Mrs. Holt.

Nor you either, Netta!

Olaf.

Oh, mother, the manager is bowing to us.

Bernick.

What?

Mrs. Bernick.

What do you say, child?

Mrs. Rummel.

Yes, I declare, and there's the woman nodding too!

Bernick.

Come, this is really too much!

Martha.

[*With an involuntary cry.*] Ah——!

Mrs. Bernick.

What is it, Martha?

Martha.

Oh, nothing—only I thought——

Olaf.

[*Shrieks with delight.*] Look, look, there come the others, with the horses and wild beasts! And there are the Americans too! All the sailors from the *Indian Girl*——

[*"Yankee Doodle" is heard, accompanied by a clarinet and drum.*]

Hilmar.

[*Stopping his ears.*] Ugh, ugh, ugh!

Rörlund.

I think we should withdraw for a moment, ladies. This is no scene for us. Let us resume our work.

Mrs. Bernick.

Perhaps we ought to draw the curtains?

Rörlund.

Yes, that is just what I was thinking.

[*The ladies take their places at the table;* Rörlund *shuts the garden-door and draws the curtains over it and over the windows; it becomes half dark in the room.*]

Olaf.

[*Peeping out.*] Mother, the manager's wife is standing at the fountain washing her face!

Mrs. Bernick.

What? In the middle of the market-place!

MRS. RUMMEL.

And in broad daylight!

HILMAR.

Well, if I were travelling in the desert and came upon a well, I should never hesitate to——. Ugh, that abominable clarinet!

RÖRLUND.

The police ought really to interfere.

BERNICK.

Oh, come; one must not be too hard upon foreigners; these people are naturally devoid of the deep-rooted sense of propriety that keeps us within the right limits. Let them do as they please; it cannot affect us. All this unseemliness, this rebellion against good taste and good manners, fortunately finds no echo, if I may say so, in our society.—What is this!

[A STRANGE LADY *enters briskly by the door on the right.*]

THE LADIES.

[*Frightened, and speaking low.*] The circus woman! The manager's wife!

MRS. BERNICK.

Why, what does this mean!

MARTHA.

[*Starts up.*] Ah——!

THE LADY.

Good morning, my dear Betty! Good morning, Martha! Good morning, brother-in-law!

MRS. BERNICK.

[*With a shriek.*] Lona——!

BERNICK.

[*Staggers back a step.*] Merciful heavens——!

MRS. HOLT.

Why, goodness me——!

MRS. RUMMEL.

It can't be possible——!

HILMAR.

What? Ugh!

MRS. BERNICK.

Lona——! Is it really——?

LONA.

Really me? Yes, indeed it is. You may fall on my neck and embrace me, for that matter.

HILMAR.

Ugh! ugh!

MRS. BERNICK.

And you come here as——?

Bernick.

You are actually going to appear——?

Lona.

Appear? How appear?

Bernick.

I mean—in the circus——?

Lona.

Ha ha ha! What nonsense, brother-in-law. Do you think I belong to the circus? No; it's true I've turned my hand to all sorts of things, and made a fool of myself in many ways——

Mrs. Rummel.

Hm——

Lona.

——but I've never learned to play tricks on horseback.

Bernick.

Then you're not——?

Mrs. Bernick.

Oh, thank God!

Lona.

No, no; we came like other respectable people—second-class, it's true; but we're used to that.

MRS. BERNICK.

We, you say?

BERNICK.

[*Advancing a step*] What we?

LONA.

Why, my boy and I, of course.

THE LADIES.

[*With a cry.*] Your boy!

HILMAR.

What?

RÖRLUND.

Well, I must say——

MRS. BERNICK.

Why, what do you mean, Lona?

LONA.

Of course I mean John; I have no other boy but John, that I know of—or Johan, as you call him.

MRS. BERNICK.

Johan——!

MRS. RUMMEL.

[*Aside to* MRS. LYNGE.] The prodigal brother!

BERNICK.

[*Hesitatingly.*] Is Johan with you?

Lona.

Of course, of course; I would never travel without him. But you're all looking so dismal—and sitting here in this twilight, sewing at something white. There hasn't been a death in the family?

Rörlund.

This is a meeting, Miss Hessel, of the Society for the Moral Regeneration of the Lapsed and Lost.

Lona.

[*Half to herself.*] What? These nice-looking, well-behaved ladies, can they be——?

Mrs. Rummel.

Oh, this is too much——!

Lona.

Ah, I see, I see! Why, good gracious, that's Mrs. Rummel! And there sits Mrs. Holt too! Well, we three haven't grown younger since last we met. But listen now, good people: let the Lapsed and Lost wait for one day; they'll be none the worse for it. On a joyful occasion like this——

Rörlund.

A return home is not always a joyful occasion.

Lona.

Indeed? Then how do you read your Bible, Pastor?

RÖRLUND.

I am not a clergyman.

LONA.

Oh; then you will be one, for certain.—But, pah!—this moral linen here has a tainted smell—just like a shroud. I'm accustomed to the air of the prairies now, I can tell you.

BERNICK.

[*Wiping his forehead.*] Yes; it really is rather oppressive in here.

LONA.

Wait a moment—we'll soon rise from the sepulchre. [*Draws back the curtains.*] We must have broad daylight here when my boy comes. Ah—then you'll see a boy that has washed himself——

HILMAR.

Ugh!

LONA.

[*Opens the door and the windows.*] ——when he has washed himself, I mean—up at the hotel—for on board the steamer you get as dirty as a pig.

HILMAR.

Ugh, ugh!

LONA.

"Ugh"? Why if that isn't——! [*Points to* HILMAR, *and asks the others.*] Does he still loaf about here saying "ugh" to everything?

HILMAR.

I don't loaf; I remain here by my doctor's orders.

RÖRLUND.

Ahem—ladies, I hardly think that ——

LONA.

[*Catches sight of* OLAF.] Is this your youngster, Betty? Give us your fist, my boy! Or are you afraid of your ugly old aunt?

RÖRLUND.

[*Putting his book under his arm.*] I do not think, ladies, that we are quite in the mood for doing more work to-day. But we shall meet again to-morrow?

LONA.

[*As the visitors rise to go.*] Yes, by all means—I shall be here.

RÖRLUND.

You? Allow me to ask, Miss Hessel, what you will do in our Society?

LONA.

I will let in fresh air, Pastor.

ACT SECOND.

The garden-room in Consul Bernick's *house.*

[Mrs. Bernick *is sitting alone at the work-table, sewing.* *In a little while* Consul Bernick *enters from the right, with his hat and gloves on, and a stick in his hand.*]

Mrs. Bernick.

Are you home already, Karsten?

Bernick.

Yes. I have an appointment here.

Mrs. Bernick.

[*Sighing.*] Oh, yes; I suppose Johan will be down here again.

Bernick.

No; it's with one of my men. [*Takes off his hat.*] Where are all the ladies to-day?

Mrs. Bernick.

Mrs. Rummel and Hilda hadn't time to come.

BERNICK.

Indeed! They have sent excuses?

MRS. BERNICK.

Yes; they had so much to do at home.

BERNICK.

Of course. And the others are not coming either, I suppose?

MRS. BERNICK.

No; something has prevented them too.

BERNICK.

I was sure it would. Where is Olaf?

MRS. BERNICK.

I allowed him to go for a walk with Dina.

BERNICK.

Hm; that scatter-brained hussy, Dina——! How could she go and forthwith strike up a friendship with Johan——!

MRS. BERNICK.

Why, my dear Karsten, Dina has no idea——

BERNICK.

Well, then, Johan at least should have had tact enough to take no notice of her. I could see Vigeland's expressive glances.

Mrs. Bernick.

[*Dropping her work into her lap.*] Karsten, can you understand what has brought them home?

Bernick.

Well, he has a farm over there, that doesn't seem to be very flourishing; and she hinted yesterday that they had to travel second-class——

Mrs. Bernick.

Yes, I was afraid it must be something of that sort. But that she should have come with him! She! After the terrible way she insulted you——!

Bernick.

Oh, don't think of those old stories.

Mrs. Bernick.

How can I think of anything else? He is my own brother——; and yet it's not him I think of, but all the unpleasantness it will bring upon you. Karsten, I'm so dreadfully afraid that——

Bernick.

What are you afraid of?

Mrs. Bernick.

Might they not think of arresting him for that money your mother lost?

BERNICK.

What nonsense! Who can prove that she lost the money?

MRS. BERNICK.

Why, the whole town knows it, unfortunately; and you said yourself——

BERNICK.

I said nothing. The town knows nothing whatever of the matter; it was all idle gossip.

MRS. BERNICK.

Oh, how noble you are, Karsten!

BERNICK.

Put all those old stories out of your head, I say! You don't know how you torture me by raking them up again. [*He walks up and down the room; then he throws his stick away from him.*] To think of their coming home just at this time, when so much depends on unmixed good-feeling, both in the press and in the town! There will be paragraphs in the papers all over the country-side. Whether I receive them well or ill, my action will be discussed, my motives turned inside out. People will rip up all those old stories—just as you do. In a society like ours—— [*Tosses down his gloves upon the table.*] And there isn't a soul here that I can confide in, or that can give me any support.

MRS. BERNICK.

No one at all, Karsten?

BERNICK.

No; you know there isn't.—That they should descend upon me just at this moment! They are certain to make a scandal in one way or another—especially she. It is nothing less than a calamity to have such people in one's family.

MRS. BERNICK.

Well, it's not my fault that——

BERNICK.

What's not your fault? That you are related to them? No; that's true enough.

MRS. BERNICK.

And it wasn't I that asked them to come home.

BERNICK.

Aha, there we have it! "*I* didn't ask them to come home; *I* didn't write for them; *I* didn't drag them home by the hair of their heads." Oh, I know the whole story off by heart.

MRS. BERNICK.

[*Bursting into tears.*] Oh, why are you so unkind?

BERNICK.

Yes, that's right; set to crying, so that the town may have that to chatter about too. Stop this nonsense, Betty. You had better sit outside there; some one might come in. Perhaps you want people

to see madam with red eyes? It would be a nice thing indeed if it got abroad that—— Ah! I hear some one in the passage. [*A knock.*] Come in.

[MRS. BERNICK *goes out to the veranda with her work.* AUNE *comes in from the right.*]

AUNE.

Good morning, Consul.

BERNICK.

Good morning. Well, I suppose you can guess what I want with you?

AUNE.

Your clerk told me yesterday that you were not pleased with——

BERNICK.

I am altogether displeased with the way things are going at the yard, Aune. You are not getting on at all with the repairs. The *Palm Tree* should have been at sea long ago. Mr. Vigeland comes worrying me about it every day. He is a troublesome partner.

AUNE.

The *Palm Tree* can sail the day after to-morrow.

BERNICK.

At last! But the American, the *Indian Girl*, that has been lying here five weeks, and——

Aune.

The American? I sort of understood that we was to do all we could to get your own ship out of hand first.

Bernick.

I have given you no reason for such an idea. You should have made all possible progress with the American too; but you have done nothing.

Aune.

The vessel's bottom is as rotten as matchwood, Consul; the more we patch at it the worse it gets.

Bernick.

That is not the real reason. Krap has told me the whole truth. You don't understand how to work the new machines I have introduced—or rather, you won't work with them.

Aune.

I'm getting on in years, Consul Bernick—nigh upon sixty. From a boy I've been used to the old ways——

Bernick.

They are quite inadequate nowadays. You mustn't think, Aune, that it's a question of mere profit; luckily I could do without that; but I must consider the community I live in, and the business I have to manage. It is from me that progress must come, or it will never come at all.

Aune.

I have nought to say against progress, Consul.

Bernick.

No, for your own narrow circle, for the working-class. Oh, I know all about your agitations! You make speeches; you stir people up; but when it comes to a tangible piece of progress, as in the case of the machines, you will have nothing to do with it; you are afraid.

Aune.

Yes, I'm afraid, Consul; I'm afraid for the hundreds of poor folks as the machines 'll take the bread out of their mouths. You talk a deal of duty towards Society, Consul, but it seems to me as Society has duties of its own as well. What business have science and capital to bring all these new-fangled inventions into the field before Society has turned out a breed of men that can use them?

Bernick.

You read and think too much, Aune; it does you no good; that is what makes you dissatisfied with your position.

Aune.

It's not that, Consul; but I can't abear to see one good workman after another packed off to starve for the sake of these machines.

Bernick.

Hm; when printing was discovered, many copyists had to starve.

AUNE.

Would you have thought printing such a fine thing, Consul, if you'd have been a copyist?

BERNICK.

I didn't get you here to argue with you. I sent for you to tell you that the *Indian Girl* must be ready to sail the day after to-morrow.

AUNE.

Why, Consul——

BERNICK.

The day after to-morrow, do you hear? At the same time as our own ship; not an hour later. I have my reasons for hurrying on the affair. Have you read this morning's paper? Ah!—then you know that the Americans have been making disturbances again. The ruffianly crew turn the whole town topsy-turvy. Not a night passes without fights in the taverns or on the street; not to speak of other abominations.

AUNE.

Yes, they're a bad lot, for certain.

BERNICK.

And who gets the blame of all this? It is I—yes I, that suffer for it. These wretched newspaper men are covertly carping at us for giving our whole attention to the *Palm Tree*. And I, whose mission it is to set an example to my fellow-citizens, must

have such things thrown in my teeth! I won't bear it. I cannot have my name bespattered in this way.

Aune.

Oh, the name of Bernick is good enough to bear that, and more.

Bernick.

Not just now; precisely at this moment I need all the respect and good-will of my fellow-citizens. I have a great undertaking in hand, as you have probably heard; and if evil-disposed persons should succeed in shaking people's unqualified confidence in me, it may involve me in the greatest difficulties. I must silence these carping and spiteful scribblers at any cost; and that is why I give you till the day after to-morrow.

Aune.

You might just as well give me till this afternoon, Consul Bernick.

Bernick.

You mean that I am demanding impossibilities?

Aune.

Yes, with the present working staff——

Bernick.

Oh, very well;—then we must look about us elsewhere.

AUNE.

Would you really turn off still more of the old workmen?

BERNICK.

No, that is not what I am thinking of.

AUNE.

I'm certain sure, if you did, there would be a fine to-do both in the town and in the newspapers.

BERNICK.

Very possibly; therefore I won't do it. But if the *Indian Girl* is not cleared the day after to-morrow, I shall dismiss you.

AUNE.

[*With a start.*] Me! [*Laughing.*] Oh, that's only your joke, Consul.

BERNICK.

I advise you not to trust to that.

AUNE.

You can think of turning me away! Why, my father before me, and his father too, worked in the shipyard all their lives, and I myself——

BERNICK.

Who forces me to it?

Aune.

You want me to do things as can't be done, Consul.

Bernick.

Oh, where there's a will there's a way. Yes or no? Answer me definitely, or I dismiss you on the spot.

Aune.

[*Coming nearer.*] Consul Bernick, have you rightly bethought what it means to turn an old workman away? You say he can look about for another job. Ay, ay, maybe he can—but is that everything? Ah, you should just see what it looks like in a turned-off workman's house, the night when he comes home and puts his tool-chest behind the door.

Bernick.

Do you think I part with you willingly? Haven't I always been a good master to you?

Aune.

So much the worse, Consul; for that means as my folks at home won't put the blame on you. They won't say nothing to me, for they durstn't; but they'll look at me when I'm not noticing, as much as to say: Certain sure, it must'a' been his fault. You see, it's that—it's that as I can't abear. God knows, I'm a poor man, but I've always been used to be the first in my own house. My bit of a home is in a manner of speaking a little community, Consul Bernick. That little community I've been able to support and

hold together because my wife believed in me, my children believed in me. And now the whole thing is to fall to pieces.

BERNICK.

Well, if it cannot be otherwise, the less must fall before the greater; the part must, in heaven's name, be sacrificed to the whole. I can give you no other answer; and you'll find it is the way of the world. But you are an obstinate fellow, Aune! You stand against me, not because you can't help it, but because you will not prove the superiority of machinery to manual labour.

AUNE.

And you're so dead set on this, Consul, because you know that, if you send me about my business, leastways you'll have shown the papers your goodwill.

BERNICK.

What if it were so? I have told you how much it means to me—I must either conciliate the papers, or have them all attacking me at the moment when I am working for a great and beneficent cause. What follows? Can I possibly act otherwise than I am doing? Would you have me, in order to hold your home together, as you call it, sacrifice hundreds of other homes—homes that will never be founded, will never have a smoking hearthstone, if I do not succeed in my present enterprise? You must make your choice.

AUNE.

Well, if you put it that way, I've got no more to say.

Bernick.

Hm—; my dear Aune, I am truly sorry we must part.

Aune.

We will not part, Consul Bernick.

Bernick.

What?

Aune.

Even a common man has his rights to stand up for here in the world.

Bernick.

Of course, of course. Then you can promise——?

Aune.

The *Indian Girl* shall be ready for sea the day after to-morrow.

[*He bows and goes out to the right.*]

Bernick.

Aha, I've made that stiff neck bend. I take that as a good omen——

[Hilmar Tönnesen, *with a cigar in his mouth, comes through the garden gate.*]

Hilmar.

[*On the veranda steps.*] Good morning, Betty! Good morning, Bernick!

Mrs. Bernick.

Good morning.

Hilmar.

Oh, you've been crying, I see. Then you've heard?

Mrs. Bernick.

Heard what?

Hilmar.

That the scandal is in full swing! Ugh!

Bernick.

What do you mean?

Hilmar.

[*Coming into the room.*] Why, that the two Americans are flaunting about the streets in company with Dina Dorf.

Mrs. Bernick.

[*Also coming in.*] Oh, Hilmar, is it possible——?

Hilmar.

I can bear witness, worse luck! Lona had even the want of tact to call out to me; but I naturally pretended not to hear her.

Bernick.

And of course all this has not passed unnoticed.

Hilmar.

No; you may be sure it hasn't. People turned

round and looked after them. It ran like wildfire over the town—like a fire on the western prairies. There were people at the windows of all the houses, head to head behind the curtains, waiting for the procession to pass. Ugh! You must excuse me, Betty; I say ugh! for it makes me so nervous. If this goes on I shall have to go for a change of air somewhere, pretty far off.

Mrs. Bernick.

But you should have spoken to him, and pointed out that——

Hilmar.

In the public street? No; I beg to be excused. But how the deuce can the fellow dare to show himself here! Well, we shall see if the papers don't put a stopper on him. I beg your pardon, Betty, but——

Bernick.

The papers, you say? Have you heard anything to make you think so?

Hilmar.

I should rather say I had! When I left here last night, I took my constitutional up to the club. I could tell from the sudden silence when I came in that they had been discussing the two Americans. And then in came that impertinent editor-fellow Hammer, or whatever they call him, and congratulated me, before everybody, upon my rich cousin's return.

Bernick.

Rich——?

Hilmar.

Yes; that was what he said. Of course I measured him from top to toe with the contempt he deserved, and gave him to understand that I knew nothing of Johan Tönnesen being rich. "Indeed!" says he; "that's strange. In America people generally get on when they have something to start with, and we know your cousin didn't go over empty-handed."

Bernick.

Hm, be so good as to——

Mrs. Bernick.

[*Troubled.*] There, you see, Karsten——

Hilmar.

Well, at any rate, not a wink have I slept for thinking of the fellow. And there he goes calmly marching about the streets, as if he had nothing to be ashamed of. Why couldn't he have been disposed of for good? Some people are intolerably tough.

Mrs. Bernick.

Oh, Hilmar, what are you saying?

Hilmar.

Oh, nothing, nothing. Only here he escapes safe and sound from railway accidents, and fights with

Californian bears and Blackfoot Indians; why, he's not even scalped——. Ugh! here they are.

BERNICK.

[*Looks down the street.*] Olaf with them too!

HILMAR.

Yes, of course; catch them letting people forget that they belong to the first family in the town. Look, look, there come all the loafers out of the drug store to stare at them and make remarks. Really, this is too much for my nerves; how a man under such circumstances is to hold high the banner of the ideal——

BERNICK.

They are coming straight here. Listen, Betty: it is my decided wish that you should be as friendly as possible to them.

MRS. BERNICK.

May I, Karsten?

BERNICK.

Of course, of course; and you too, Hilmar. I daresay they won't remain very long; and when we are alone with them—let us have no allusions to the past—we must on no account hurt their feelings.

MRS. BERNICK.

Oh, Karsten, how noble you are.

BERNICK.

No, no, nothing of the sort.

MRS. BERNICK.

Oh, but you must let me thank you; and forgive me for being so hasty. You had every reason to——

BERNICK.

Don't talk of it, don't talk of it, I say.

HILMAR.

Ugh!

[JOHAN TÖNNESEN *and* DINA, *followed by* LONA *and* OLAF, *come through the garden.*]

LONA.

Good morning, good morning, my dear people.

JOHAN.

We have been out looking all round the old place, Karsten.

BERNICK.

Yes, so I hear. Greatly changed, is it not?

LONA.

Consul Bernick's great and good works on every hand. We've been up in the gardens you have presented to the town——

BERNICK.

Oh, there!

LONA.

"Karsten Bernick's Gift," as the inscription over the entrance says. Yes; everything here seems to be your work.

JOHAN.

And you have splendid ships too. I met my old school-fellow, the captain of the *Palm Tree*——

LONA.

Yes, and you've built a new school-house; and they owe both the gas and the waterworks to you, I hear.

BERNICK.

Oh, one must work for the community one lives in.

LONA.

Well, you've done your part finely, brother-in-law; but it's a pleasure, too, to see how people appreciate you. I don't think I'm vain, but I couldn't help reminding one or two of the people we talked to that we belong to the family.

HILMAR.

Ugh——!

LONA.

Do you say "Ugh!" to that?

HILMAR.

No, I said "Hm"——

LONA.

Oh, was that all, poor fellow? But you are quite alone here to-day!

MRS. BERNICK.

Yes, to-day we are quite alone.

LONA.

By-the-bye, we met one or two of the Moral Regenerators up in the market-place; they seemed to be very busy. But we've never had a proper talk yet; yesterday we had the three pioneers of progress here, and the Pastor too——

HILMAR.

The Doctor.

LONA.

I call him the Pastor. But now—what do you think of my work for these fifteen years? Hasn't he grown a fine boy? Who would recognise him now for the scapegrace that ran away from home?

HILMAR.

Hm——!

JOHAN.

Oh, Lona, don't boast too much.

LONA.

I don't care, I'm really proud of it. Well, well, it's

the only thing I have done in the world, but it gives me a sort of right to exist. Yes, Johan, when I think how we two began life over there with only our four bare paws——

HILMAR.

Hands.

LONA.

I say paws, they were so dirty——

HILMAR.

Ugh!

LONA.

——and empty too.

HILMAR.

Empty! Well, I must say?

LONA.

What must you say?

BERNICK.

Hm!

HILMAR.

I must say—ugh!

[*Goes out upon the veranda.*]

LONA.

Why, what's wrong with the man?

BERNICK.

Oh, never mind him; he's rather nervous just now.

Should you like to take a look round the garden? You haven't been down there yet, and I happen to have an hour to spare.

LONA.

Yes, I should like it very much; you may be sure my thoughts have often been with you all, here in the garden.

MRS. BERNICK.

There have been great changes there too, as you'll see.

[CONSUL BERNICK, MRS. BERNICK, *and* LONA *go down the garden, where they are now and then visible during the following scene.*]

OLAF.

[*At the garden door.*] Uncle Hilmar, do you know what Uncle Johan asked me? He asked if I'd like to go with him to America.

HILMAR.

You, you little muff, that go about tied to your mother's apron-strings——

OLAF.

Yes, but I won't be so any more. You shall see, when I'm big——

HILMAR.

Oh, rubbish; you have no real craving for the discipline of danger——

[*They go down the garden together.*]

JOHAN.

[*To* DINA, *who has taken off her hat, and stands at the door to the right, shaking the dust from her dress.*] The walk has made you very warm.

DINA.

Yes; it was splendid. I have never had such a nice walk before.

JOHAN.

Perhaps you don't often go for a walk in the morning?

DINA.

Oh, yes; but only with Olaf.

JOHAN.

Ah!—Should you like to go down the garden, or to stay here?

DINA.

I would rather stay here.

JOHAN.

And I too. Then it's settled that we go for a walk together every morning?

DINA.

No, Mr. Tönnesen, you mustn't do that.

JOHAN.

Why not? You know you promised.

DINA.

Yes, but on thinking it over, I—— You mustn't go about with me.

JOHAN.

Why on earth should I not?

DINA.

Ah, you are a stranger here; you don't understand; but I must tell you——

JOHAN.

Well?

DINA.

No, I would rather not speak about it.

JOHAN.

Oh, yes—surely you can speak to me about anything you wish to.

DINA.

Then I must tell you that I am not like the other girls here; there is something—something about me. That is why you mustn't walk with me.

JOHAN.

But I don't understand a word of this. You haven't done anything wrong?

DINA.

No, not I, but——; no, I won't say anything more about it. You are sure to hear it from the others.

JOHAN.

Hm——

DINA.

But there was something else I wanted to ask you about.

JOHAN.

And what was that?

DINA.

Is it really so easy to lead a life that is worth living over in America?

JOHAN.

Well, it isn't always easy; you have generally to rough it a good deal, and work hard, to begin with.

DINA.

I would willingly do that.

JOHAN.

You?

DINA.

I can work well enough; I am strong and healthy, and Aunt Martha has taught me a great deal.

JOHAN.

Then, hang it all, why not come with us?

DINA.

Oh, now you are only joking; you said the same to Olaf. But I wanted to know, too, if people over there are very—very moral, you know?

JOHAN.

Moral?

DINA.

Yes, I mean, are they as—as proper and well-behaved as they are here?

JOHAN.

Well, at any rate, they are not so bad as people here think. Don't be at all afraid of that.

DINA.

You don't understand. What I want is just that they should not be so very proper and moral.

JOHAN.

Indeed? What would you have them then?

DINA.

I would have them natural.

JOHAN.

Well, that is perhaps just what they are.

DINA.

Then that would be the place for me.

JOHAN.

Yes, I am sure it would; so you must come with us.

Dina.

No, I wouldn't go with you; I should have to go alone. Oh, I should get on; I should soon be fit for something——

Bernick.

[*At the foot of the veranda steps with the two ladies.*] Stay here, stay here; I'll fetch it, my dear Betty. You might easily catch cold.

[*Comes into the room and looks for his wife's shawl.*]

Mrs. Bernick.

[*From the garden.*] You must come too, Johan; we are going down to the grotto.

Bernick.

No, Johan must stay here just now. Here, Dina; take my wife's shawl and go with them. Johan will stay here with me, my dear Betty. I want him to tell me a little about things in America.

Mrs. Bernick.

Very well; then come after us; you know where to find us.

[Mrs. Bernick, Lona, *and* Dina *go down through the garden to the left.*]

Bernick.

[*Looks out after them for a moment, goes and shuts the second door on the left, then goes up to* Johan,

seizes both his hands, shakes them, and presses them warmly.] Johan, now we are alone; now you must give me leave to thank you.

JOHAN.

Oh, nonsense!

BERNICK.

My house and home, my domestic happiness, my whole position in society—all these I owe to you.

JOHAN.

Well, I am glad of it, my dear Karsten; so some good came of that foolish story after all.

BERNICK.

[*Shaking his hands again.*] Thanks, thanks, all the same! Not one in ten thousand would have done what you did for me then.

JOHAN.

Oh, nonsense! Were we not both of us young and a bit reckless? One of us had to take the blame upon him——

BERNICK.

Yes, and the guilty one was the obvious person.

JOHAN.

Stop! Then the obvious person was the innocent one. I was alone, free, an orphan; it was a positive blessing to me to escape from the grind of the office. You, on the other hand, had your mother still living;

and, besides, you had just got secretly engaged to Betty, and she was devoted to you. What would have become of her if she had learnt——?

Bernick.

True, true, true; but——

Johan.

And was it not just for Betty's sake that you broke off the entanglement with Madam Dorf? It was for the very purpose of putting an end to it that you were up at her house that night——

Bernick.

Yes, the fatal night when that drunken brute came home——! Yes, Johan, it was for Betty's sake; but yet—that you should have the generosity to turn appearances against yourself and go away——

Johan.

You need have no qualms, my dear Karsten. We agreed that it should be so; you had to be saved, and you were my friend. I can tell you I was proud of that friendship! Here was I, poor stay-at-home, plodding along, when you came back like a very prince from your great foreign tour—from London and Paris, no less! Then what should you do but choose me for your bosom friend, though I was four years younger than you. Well, that was because you were making love to Betty; now I understand it well enough. But how proud I was of it then! And who would not have been proud! Who would not

gladly have served as your scapegoat, especially when it only meant a month's town-talk, and an excuse for making a dash into the wide world.

BERNICK.

Hm—my dear Johan, I must tell you frankly that the story is not so entirely forgotten yet.

JOHAN.

Isn't it? Well, what does it matter to me when once I am back again at my farm?

BERNICK.

Then you are going back?

JOHAN.

Of course.

BERNICK.

But not so very soon, I hope?

JOHAN.

As soon as possible. It was only to please Lona that I came over at all.

BERNICK.

Indeed! How so?

JOHAN.

Well, you see, Lona is not so young as she once was, and for some time past a sort of home-sickness has come over her, though she would never admit it.

[*Smiling.*] She dared not leave behind her a scapegrace like me, who, before I was out of my teens, had been mixed up in——

Bernick.

And then?

Johan.

Well, Karsten, now I must make a confession I am really ashamed of.

Bernick.

You haven't told her the whole story?

Johan.

Yes, I have. It was wrong of me, but I couldn't help it. You have no conception what Lona has been to me. You could never endure her; but to me she has been a mother. The first few years over there, when we were desperately poor,—oh, how she worked! And when I had a long illness, and could earn nothing, and couldn't keep her from doing it, she took to singing songs in the cafés; gave lectures that people laughed at; wrote a book she has both laughed and cried over since—and all to keep my soul and body together. Last winter, when I saw her pining for home, her who had toiled and slaved for me, could I sit still and look on? No, Karsten, I couldn't. I said, "Go, go, Lona; don't be anxious on my account. I'm not such a ne'er-do-well as you think." And then—then I told her everything.

Bernick.

And how did she take it?

JOHAN.

Oh, she said what was quite true—that as I was innocent I could have no objection to taking a trip over here myself. But you needn't be afraid; Lona will say nothing, and I shall take better care of my own tongue another time.

BERNICK.

Yes, yes; I am sure you will.

JOHAN.

Here is my hand upon it. And now don't let us talk any more of that old story; fortunately it is the only escapade either you or I have been mixed up in, I hope. And now I mean thoroughly to enjoy the few days I shall have here. You can't think what a splendid walk we have had this forenoon. Who could have imagined that the little baggage that used to trot about and play angels in the theatre——! But tell me—what became of her parents afterwards?

BERNICK.

Oh, there's nothing to tell except what I wrote you immediately after you left. You got my two letters, of course?

JOHAN.

Of course, of course; I have them both. The drunken scoundrel deserted her?

BERNICK.

And was afterwards killed in a drinking-bout.

JOHAN.

And she herself died soon after? I suppose you did all you could for her without exciting attention?

BERNICK.

She was proud; she betrayed nothing, but she would accept nothing.

JOHAN.

Well, at any rate, you did right in taking Dina into your house.

BERNICK.

Oh, yes—— However, it was really Martha that arranged that.

JOHAN.

Ah, it was Martha? By-the-bye, where is Martha to-day?

BERNICK.

Oh, she is always busy either at the school, or among her sick people.

JOHAN.

Then it was Martha that took charge of Dina?

BERNICK.

Yes; education has always been Martha's hobby. That is why she accepted a place in the national school. It was a piece of folly on her part.

JOHAN.

She certainly looked very much done up yesterday. I should scarcely think her health would stand it.

BERNICK.

Oh, I don't think there's much amiss with her health. But it's unpleasant for me. It looks as if I, her brother, were not willing to maintain her.

JOHAN.

Maintain her? I thought she had enough of her own to——

BERNICK.

Not a halfpenny. I daresay you remember what difficulties my mother was in when you left. She got on for some time with my help; but of course that arrangement could not permanently satisfy me. So I got myself taken into partnership; but even then things were far from going well. At last I had to take over the whole affair; and when we came to make up accounts, there was scarcely anything left to my mother's share. Then, shortly afterwards, she died; and Martha, of course, was left with nothing.

JOHAN.

Poor Martha!

BERNICK.

Poor! Why so? You don't suppose I let her want for anything? Oh no; I think I may say I am a good brother to her. Of course she lives here and

has her meals with us; her salary as a teacher is quite enough for her dress, and—what can a single woman want more?

JOHAN.

Hm; that's not the way we think in America.

BERNICK.

No, I daresay not; there are too many agitators at work over there. But here, in our little circle, where, thank heaven, corruption has not as yet managed to creep in—here women are content with a modest and unobtrusive position. For the rest, it is Martha's own fault; she could have been provided for long ago if she had cared to.

JOHAN.

You mean she could have married?

BERNICK.

Yes, and married very well too; she has had several good offers. Strangely enough!—a woman without money, no longer young, and quite insignificant.

JOHAN.

Insignificant?

BERNICK.

Oh, I am not blaming her at all. Indeed, I would not have her otherwise. In a large house like ours, you know, it is always convenient to have some steady-going person like her, whom one can put to anything that may turn up.

JOHAN.

Yes, but she herself——?

BERNICK.

She herself? What do you mean? Oh, of course she has plenty to interest herself in—Betty, and Olaf, and me, you know. People ought not to think of themselves first; women least of all. We have each our community, great or small, to support and work for. I do so, at any rate. [*Pointing to* KRAP, *who enters from the right.*] See, here you have an instance. Do you think it is my own business I am occupied with? By no means. [*Quickly to* KRAP.] Well?

KRAP.

[*Whispers, showing him a bundle of papers.*] All the arrangements for the purchase are complete.

BERNICK.

Capital! excellent!—Oh, Johan, you must excuse me for a moment. [*Low, and with a pressure of the hand.*] Thanks, thanks, Johan; and be sure that anything I can do to serve you—you understand.—Come, Mr. Krap!

[*They go into the Consul's office.*]

JOHAN.

[*Looks after him for some time.*] Hm——!

[*He turns to go down the garden. At the same time* MARTHA *enters from the right with a little basket on her arm.*]

JOHAN.

Ah, Martha!

MARTHA.

Oh—Johan—is that you?

JOHAN.

Have you been out so early too?

MARTHA.

Yes. Wait a little; the others will be here soon.
[*Turns to go out to the left.*]

JOHAN.

Tell me, Martha,—why are you always in such a hurry?

MARTHA.

I?

JOHAN.

Yesterday you seemed to keep out of my way, so that I could not get a word with you; and to-day——

MARTHA.

Yes, but——

JOHAN.

Before, we were always together—we two old playfellows.

MARTHA.

Ah, Johan, that is many, many years ago.

JOHAN.

Why, bless me, it's fifteen years ago, neither more nor less. Perhaps you think I have changed a great deal?

MARTHA.

You? Oh yes, you too, although——

JOHAN.

What do you mean?

MARTHA.

Oh, nothing.

JOHAN.

You don't seem overjoyed to see me again.

MARTHA.

I have waited so long, Johan—too long.

JOHAN.

Waited? For me to come?

MARTHA.

Yes.

JOHAN.

And why did you think I would come?

MARTHA.

To expiate where you had sinned.

JOHAN.

I?

MARTHA.

Have you forgotten that a woman died in shame and need for your sake? Have you forgotten that by your fault a young girl's best years have been embittered?

JOHAN.

And you say this to me? Martha, has your brother never——?

MARTHA.

What of him?

JOHAN.

Has he never——? Oh, I mean has he never said so much as a word in my defence?

MARTHA.

Ah, Johan, you know Karsten's strict principles.

JOHAN.

Hm—of course, of course,—yes, I know my old friend Karsten's strict principles.—But this is——! Well, well—I have just been talking to him. It seems to me he has changed a good deal.

MARTHA.

How can you say so? Karsten has always been an excellent man.

JOHAN.

That was not exactly what I meant; but let that pass.—Hm; now I understand the light you have seen me in; it is the prodigal's return that you have been waiting for.

MARTHA.

Listen, Johan, and I will tell you in what light I have seen you. [*Points down to the garden.*] Do you see that girl playing on the lawn with Olaf? That is Dina. Do you remember that confused letter you wrote me when you went away? You asked me to believe in you. I have believed in you, Johan. All the bad things that there were rumours of afterwards must have been done in desperation, without thought, without purpose——

JOHAN.

What do you mean?

MARTHA.

Oh, you understand me well enough; no more of that. But you had to go away—to begin afresh—a new life. See, Johan, I have stood in your place here, I, your old playfellow. The duties you forgot, or could not fulfil, I have fulfilled for you. I tell you this, that you may have the less to reproach yourself with. I have been a mother to that much-wronged child; I have brought her up as well as I could——

JOHAN.

And thrown away your whole life in doing so!

Martha.

It has not been thrown away. But you have been long of coming, Johan.

Johan.

Martha—if I could say to you——. Well, at all events let me thank you for your faithful friendship.

Martha.

[*Smiling sadly.*] Ah——! Well, now we have made a clean breast of things, Johan. Hush, here comes some one. Good-bye; I don't want them to——

[*She goes out through the second door on the left.* Lona Hessel *comes from the garden, followed by* Mrs. Bernick.]

Mrs. Bernick.

[*Still in the garden.*] Good heavens, Lona, what can you be thinking of?

Lona.

Let me alone, I tell you; I must and will talk to him.

Mrs. Bernick.

Think what a frightful scandal it would be! Ah, Johan, are you still here?

Lona.

Out with you, boy; don't hang about indoors in the stuffy rooms; go down the garden and talk to Dina.

JOHAN.

Just what I was thinking of doing.

MRS. BERNICK.

But——

LONA.

Listen, Johan; have you ever really looked at Dina?

JOHAN.

Yes; I should think I had.

LONA.

Well, you should look at her to some purpose. She's the very thing for you.

MRS. BERNICK.

But, Lona——!

JOHAN.

The thing for me?

LONA.

Yes, to look at, I mean. Now go!

JOHAN.

Yes, yes; I don't need any driving.

[*He goes down the garden.*]

MRS. BERNICK.

Lona, you amaze me. You cannot possibly be in earnest.

LONA.

Yes, indeed I am. Isn't she fresh, and sound, and true? She's just the wife for John. She's the sort of companion he needs over there; a different thing from an old step-sister.

MRS. BERNICK.

Dina! Dina Dorf! Just think——!

LONA.

I think first and foremost of the boy's happiness. Help him I must and will; he needs a little help in such matters; he has never had much of an eye for women.

MRS. BERNICK.

He? Johan! Surely we have sad cause to know that——

LONA.

Oh, deuce take that foolish old story! Where is Bernick? I want to speak to him.

MRS. BERNICK.

Lona, you shall not do it, I tell you!

LONA.

I shall do it. If the boy likes her, and she him, why then they shall have each other. Bernick is such a clever man; he must manage the thing——

MRS. BERNICK.

And you think that these American infamies will be tolerated here——

LONA.

Nonsense, Betty——

MRS. BERNICK.

——that a man like Karsten, with his strict moral ideas——

LONA.

Oh, come now, surely they're not so tremendously strict as all that.

MRS. BERNICK.

What do you dare to say?

LONA.

I dare to say that I don't believe Karsten Bernick is so very much more moral than other men.

MRS. BERNICK.

Do you still hate him, then, so bitterly? What can you want here, since you have never been able to forget that——? I can't understand how you dare look him in the face, after the shameful way you insulted him.

LONA.

Yes, Betty, I forgot myself terribly that time.

MRS. BERNICK.

And how nobly he has forgiven you—he, who had done no wrong! For he couldn't help your foolish fancies. But since that time you have hated me too.

[*Bursts into tears.*] You have always envied me my happiness. And now you come here to heap this trouble upon me—to show the town what sort of a family I have brought Karsten into. Yes; it is I that have to suffer for it all; and that's just what you want. Oh, it's hateful of you!

[*She goes out crying through the second door on the left.*]

LONA.

[*Looking after her.*] Poor Betty!

[CONSUL BERNICK *comes out of his office.*]

BERNICK.

[*Still at the door.*] Yes, yes; that's all right, Krap—that's excellent. Send four hundred crowns for a dinner to the poor. [*Turns.*] Lona! [*Advancing.*] You are alone? Is not Betty here?

LONA.

No. Shall I call her?

BERNICK.

No, no; please don't! Oh, Lona, you don't know how I have been burning to talk openly with you—to beg for your forgiveness.

LONA.

Now listen, Karsten: don't let us get sentimental. It doesn't suit us.

BERNICK.

You must hear me, Lona. I know very well how

much appearances are against me, since you have heard all that about Dina's mother. But I swear to you it was only a momentary aberration; at one time I really, truly, and honestly loved you.

LONA.

What do you think has brought me home just now?

BERNICK.

Whatever you have in mind, I implore you to do nothing before I have justified myself. I can do it, Lona; at least I can show that I was not altogether to blame.

LONA.

Now you are frightened.—You once loved me, you say? Yes, you assured me so, often enough, in your letters; and perhaps it was true, too—after a fashion—so long as you were living out there in a great, free world, that gave you courage to think freely and greatly yourself. Perhaps you found in me a little more character, and will, and independence than in most people at home here. And then it was a secret between us two; no one could make fun of your bad taste.

BERNICK.

Lona, how can you think——?

LONA.

But when you came home; when you saw the ridicule that poured down upon me; when you heard the laughter at what were called my eccentricities——

Bernick.

You were inconsiderate in those days.

Lona.

Mainly for the sake of annoying the prudes, both in trousers and petticoats, that infested the town. And then you fell in with that fascinating young actress——

Bernick.

The whole thing was a piece of folly—nothing more. I swear to you, not a tithe of the scandal and tittle-tattle was true.

Lona.

Perhaps not; but then Betty came home—young, beautiful, idolised by every one—and when it became known that she was to have all our aunt's money, and I nothing——

Bernick.

Yes, here we are at the root of the matter, Lona; and now you shall hear the plain truth. I did not love Betty then; it was for no new fancy that I broke with you. It was entirely for the sake of the money; I was forced to do it; I had to make sure of the money.

Lona.

And you tell me this to my face!

Bernick.

Yes, I do. Hear me, Lona——

LONA.

And yet you wrote me that an irresistible passion for Betty had seized you, appealed to my magnanimity, conjured me for Betty's sake to say nothing of what had passed between us——

BERNICK.

I had to, I tell you.

LONA.

Now, by all that's holy, I'm not sorry I forgot myself as I did that day.

BERNICK.

Let me tell you, calmly and quietly, what my position was at that time. My mother, you know, stood at the head of the business; but she had no business capacity. I was hurriedly called home from Paris; the times were critical; I was to retrieve the situation. What did I find? I found—and this, remember, had to be kept strictly secret—a house as good as ruined. Yes, it was as good as ruined, the old, respected house, that had stood through three generations. What could I, the son, the only son, do, but cast about me for a means of saving it?

LONA.

So you saved the house of Bernick at the expense of a woman.

BERNICK.

You know very well that Betty loved me.

Lona.

But I?

Bernick.

Believe me, Lona, you would never have been happy with me.

Lona.

Was it your care for my happiness that made you play me false?

Bernick.

Do you think it was from selfish motives that I acted as I did? If I had stood alone then, I would have begun the world again bravely and cheerfully. But you don't understand how the head of a great house becomes a living part of the business he inherits, with its enormous responsibility. Do you know that the welfare of hundreds, ay of thousands, depends upon him? Can you not consider that it would have been nothing short of a disaster to the whole community, which both you and I call our home, if the house of Bernick had fallen?

Lona.

Is it for the sake of the community, then, that for these fifteen years you have stood upon a lie?

Bernick.

A lie?

Lona.

How much does Betty know of all that lay beneath and before her marriage with you?

BERNICK.

Can you think that I would wound her to no purpose by telling her these things?

LONA.

To no purpose, you say? Well well, you are a business man; you should understand what is to the purpose.—But listen, Karsten: I, too, will speak calmly and quietly. Tell me—after all, are you really happy?

BERNICK.

In my family, do you mean?

LONA.

Of course.

BERNICK.

I am indeed, Lona. Oh, you have not sacrificed yourself in vain. I can say truly that I have grown happier year by year. Betty is so good and docile. In the course of years she has learnt to mould her character to what is peculiar in mine——

LONA.

Hm.

BERNICK.

At first, it is true, she had some high-flown notions about love; she could not reconcile herself to the thought that, little by little, it must pass over into a placid friendship.

LONA.

But she is quite reconciled to that now?

Bernick.

Entirely. You may guess that daily intercourse with me has not been without a ripening influence upon her. People must learn to moderate their mutual claims if they are to fulfil their duties in the community in which they are placed. Betty has by degrees come to understand this, so that our house is now a model for our fellow-citizens.

Lona.

But these fellow-citizens know nothing of the lie?

Bernick.

Of the lie?

Lona.

Yes, of the lie upon which you have stood for these fifteen years.

Bernick.

You call that——?

Lona.

I call it the lie—the threefold lie. First the lie towards me; then the lie towards Betty; then the lie towards Johan.

Bernick.

Betty has never asked me to speak.

Lona.

Because she has known nothing.

BERNICK.

And you will not ask me to;—out of consideration for her, you will not.

LONA.

Oh, no; I daresay I shall manage to bear all the ridicule; I have a broad back.

BERNICK.

And Johan will not ask me either—he has promised me that.

LONA.

But you yourself, Karsten? Is there not something within you that longs to get clear of the lie?

BERNICK.

You would have me voluntarily sacrifice my domestic happiness and my position in society!

LONA.

What right have you to stand where you are standing?

BERNICK.

For fifteen years I have every day earned a clearer right—by my whole life, by all I have laboured for, by all I have achieved.

LONA.

Yes, you have laboured for much and achieved much, both for yourself and others. You are the richest and most powerful man in the town; they

have to bow before your will, all of them, because you are held to be a man without stain or flaw—your home is a model, your life is a model. But all this magnificence, and you yourself along with it, stand on a trembling quicksand. A moment may come, a word may be spoken—and, if you do not save yourself in time, you and all your grandeur go to the bottom.

Bernick.

Lona—what did you come here to do?

Lona.

To help you to get firm ground under your feet, Karsten.

Bernick.

Revenge! You want to revenge yourself. I thought as much! But you will not succeed! There is only one who has a right to speak, and he is silent.

Lona.

Johan?

Bernick.

Yes, Johan. If any one else accuses me, I shall deny everything. If you try to crush me, I shall fight for my life. You will never succeed, I tell you! He who could destroy me will not speak—and he is going away again.

[Rummel *and* Vigeland *enter from the right.*]

RUMMEL.

Good morning, good morning, my dear Bernick. You are coming with us to the Trade Council? We have a meeting on the railway business, you know.

BERNICK.

I cannot. It's impossible just now.

VIGELAND.

You really must, Consul——

RUMMEL.

You must, Bernick. There are people working against us. Hammer and the other men who were in favour of the coast line, declare that there are private interests lurking behind the new proposal.

BERNICK.

Why, then, explain to them——

VIGELAND.

It's no good our explaining to them, Consul——

RUMMEL.

No, no, you must come yourself. Of course no one will dare to suspect you of anything of that sort.

LONA.

No, I should think not.

Bernick.

I cannot, I tell you; I am unwell;—at any rate wait —let me collect myself.

[Doctor Rörlund *enters from the right.*]

Rörlund.

Excuse me, Consul; you see me most painfully agitated——

Bernick.

Well, well, what is the matter with you?

Rörlund.

I must ask you a question, Consul Bernick. Is it with your consent that the young girl who has found an asylum under your roof shows herself in the public streets in company with a person whom——

Lona.

What person, Pastor?

Rörlund.

With the person from whom, of all others in the world, she should be kept furthest apart.

Lona.

Ho-ho!

Rörlund.

Is it with your consent, Consul?

BERNICK.

I know nothing about it. [*Looking for his hat and gloves.*] Excuse me; I am in a hurry; I am going up to the Trade Council.

HILMAR.

[*Enters from the garden and goes over to the second door to the left.*] Betty, Betty, come here!

MRS. BERNICK.

[*In the doorway.*] What is it?

HILMAR.

You must go down the garden and put a stop to the flirtation a certain person is carrying on with Miss Dina Dorf. It has made me quite nervous to listen to it.

LONA.

Indeed? What did the person say?

HILMAR.

Oh, only that he wants her to go with him to America. Ugh!

RÖRLUND.

Can such things be possible!

MRS. BERNICK.

What do you say?

LONA.

Why, that would be capital.

Bernick.

Impossible! You must have misunderstood him.

Hilmar.

Then ask himself. Here come the couple. Only don't drag me into the business.

Bernick.

[*To* Rummel *and* Vigeland] I shall follow you —in a moment——

[Rummel *and* Vigeland *go out to the right.* Johan Tönnesen *and* Dina *come in from the garden.*]

Johan.

Hurrah, Lona, she's coming with us!

Mrs. Bernick.

Oh, Johan—how can you!

Rörlund.

Can this be true? Such a crying scandal? By what vile arts have you—— ?

Johan.

What, what, man? What are you saying?

Rörlund.

Answer me, Dina: is this your intention?—deliberately formed, and of your own free will?

DINA.

I must get away from here.

RÖRLUND.

But with him—with him!

DINA.

Tell me of any one else that has courage to set me free?

RÖRLUND.

Then you shall know who he is.

JOHAN.

Be silent!

BERNICK.

Not a word more!

RÖRLUND.

Then I should ill serve the community over whose manners and morals it is my duty to keep watch; and I should act most indefensibly towards this young girl, in whose training I have borne an important share, and who is to me——

JOHAN.

Take care what you are doing!

RÖRLUND.

She shall know it! Dina, it was this man who caused all your mother's misfortune and shame.

Bernick.

Rector——!

Dina.

He! [*To* Johan.] Is this true?

Johan.

Karsten, you answer!

Bernick.

Not a word more! Not a word more to day.

Dina.

Then it is true.

Rörlund.

True, true! And more than that. This person, in whom you were about to place your trust, did not run away empty-handed—Mrs. Bernick's strong-box—the Consul can bear witness!

Lona.

Liar!

Bernick.

Ah——!

Mrs. Bernick.

Oh God! oh God!

Johan.

[*Goes towards him with uplifted arm.*] You dare to——!

Lona.

[*Keeping him back*] Don't strike him, Johan.

RÖRLUND.

Yes, yes; assault me if you like. But the truth shall out; and this is the truth. Consul Bernick has said so himself; it is notorious to the whole town.—Now, Dina, now you know him.

[*A short pause.*]

JOHAN.

[*Softly, seizing* BERNICK'S *arm.*] Karsten, Karsten, what have you done?

MRS. BERNICK.

[*Softly, in tears.*] Oh, Karsten, that I should bring all this shame upon you!

SANDSTAD.

[*Enters hastily from the right, and says, with his hand still on the door-handle.*] You must really come now, Consul! The whole railway is hanging by a thread.

BERNICK.

[*Absently.*] What is it? What am I to——?

LONA.

[*Earnestly and with emphasis.*] You are to rise and support society, brother-in-law!

SANDSTAD.

Yes, come, come; we need all your moral predominance.

JOHAN.

[*Close to him.*] Bernick,—we two will talk of this to-morrow.

[*He goes out through the garden;* BERNICK *goes out to the right with* SANDSTAD, *as if his will were paralysed*]

ACT THIRD.

The garden-room in Consul Bernick's *house.*

[Bernick, *with a cane in his hand, enters, in a violent passion, from the second room on the left, leaving the door half open.*]

Bernick.

There, now! At last I've done it in earnest; I don't think he'll forget that thrashing. [*To some one in the other room.*] What do you say?—*I* say you are a foolish mother! You make excuses for him, and encourage him in all his naughtiness—— Not naughtiness? What do you call it then? To steal out of the house at night and go to sea in a fishing boat; to remain out till late in the day, and put me in mortal terror, as if I hadn't enough anxiety without that. And the young rascal dares to threaten me with running away! Just let him try it!—You? No, I daresay not; you don't seem to care much what becomes of him. I believe if he were to break his neck——! Oh, indeed? But it happens that *I* need some one to carry on my work in the world; it would not suit me to be left childless. Don't argue, Betty; I have said it once for all; he is not to leave the

house. [*Listens.*] Hush, don't let people notice anything.

[Krap *comes in from the right.*]

Krap.

Can you spare me a moment, Consul?

Bernick.

[*Throws away the cane.*] Of course, of course. Have you come from the shipyard?

Krap.

Just this moment. Hm——

Bernick.

Well? Nothing wrong with the *Palm Tree*, I hope?

Krap.

The *Palm Tree* can sail to-morrow, but——

Bernick.

The *Indian Girl*, then? I might have guessed that that stiff-necked——

Krap.

The *Indian Girl* can sail to-morrow, too; but—I don't think she will get very far.

Bernick.

What do you mean?

KRAP.

Excuse me, Consul, that door is ajar, and I think there is some one in the room——

BERNICK.

[*Shuts the door.*] There then. But what is the meaning of all this secrecy?

KRAP.

It means this: I believe Aune intends to send the *Indian Girl* to the bottom, with every soul on board.

BERNICK.

Good heavens! how can you think——?

KRAP.

I can explain it in no other way, Consul.

BERNICK.

Well then, tell me as shortly as you can——

KRAP.

I will. You know how things have been dragging in the yard since we got the new machines and the new inexperienced workmen?

BERNICK.

Yes, yes.

KRAP.

But this morning, when I went down there, I noticed that the repairs on the American had been

going at a great rate. The big patch in her bottom—the rotten place, you know——

BERNICK.

Yes, yes; what about it?

KRAP.

It was completely repaired—to all appearance; plastered up; looked as good as new. I heard that Aune himself had been working at it by lantern-light the whole night through.

BERNICK.

Yes, yes, and then——?

KRAP.

I was a good deal puzzled. It happened that the workmen were at breakfast, so I could poke about as I pleased, both outside and inside. It was difficult to get down into the hold, among the cargo; but I saw enough to convince me. There is rascality at work, Consul.

BERNICK.

I can't believe it, Mr. Krap. I cannot and will not believe such a thing of Aune.

KRAP.

I'm sorry for it, but it's the simple truth. There is rascality at work, I say. Not a stick of new timber had been put in, so far as I could see. It was only plugged and puttied up, and covered with plates and

tarpaulins, and so forth. All bogus! The *Indian Girl* will never get to New York. She'll go to the bottom like a cracked pot.

Bernick.

Why, this is horrible! What do you think can be his motive?

Krap.

He probably wants to bring the machines into discredit; wants to revenge himself; wants to have the old workmen taken on again.

Bernick.

And for that he would send all these men to their death?

Krap.

He has been heard to say that the crew of the *Indian Girl* are brute beasts, not men.

Bernick.

Yes, yes, that may be; but does he not think of the great loss of capital?

Krap.

Aune is not over-fond of capital, Consul.

Bernick.

True enough; he is an agitator and mischief-maker; but such a piece of villainy as this——! I'll

tell you what, Mr. Krap: this affair must be looked into again. Not a word of it to any one. Our yard would lose its reputation if this came to people's ears.

KRAP.

Of course, but——

BERNICK.

During the dinner hour you must go down there again; I must have absolute certainty.

KRAP.

You shall, Consul. But, excuse me, what will you do then?

BERNICK.

Why, report the case of course. We cannot be accessories to a crime. I must keep my conscience clear. Besides, it will make a good impression on both the press and the public, to see me disregard all personal interests, and let justice take its course.

KRAP.

Very true, Consul.

BERNICK.

But, first of all, absolute certainty—and, until then, silence.

KRAP.

Not a word, Consul; and you shall have absolute certainty.

[*He goes out through the garden and down the street.*]

BERNICK.

[*Half aloud.*] Horrible! But no, it's impossible —inconceivable!

[*As he turns to go to his own room* HILMAR TÖNNESEN *enters from the right.*]

HILMAR.

Good day, Bernick! Well, I congratulate you on your field-day in the Trade Council yesterday.

BERNICK.

Oh, thank you.

HILMAR.

It was a brilliant victory, I hear; the victory of intelligent public spirit over self-interest and prejudice —like a French razzia upon the Kabyles. Strange, that after the unpleasant scene here, you——

BERNICK.

Yes, yes, don't speak of it.

HILMAR.

But the tug of war is yet to come.

BERNICK.

In the matter of the railway, you mean?

HILMAR.

Yes. I suppose you have heard of the egg that our editor friend is hatching?

Bernick.

[*Anxiously.*] No! What is it?

Hilmar.

Oh, he has got hold of the rumour that's floating about, and is coming out with an article on the subject.

Bernick.

What rumour?

Hilmar.

Why, about the great buying-up of property along the branch line, of course.

Bernick.

What do you mean? Is there any such rumour about?

Hilmar.

Yes, over the whole town. I heard it at the club. They say that one of our lawyers has been secretly commissioned to buy up all the forests, all the mining rights, all the water-power——

Bernick.

And is it known for whom?

Hilmar.

They thought at the club that it must be for a company from some other town that had got wind of your scheme, and had rushed in before the prices rose. Isn't it disgraceful? Ugh!

BERNICK.

Disgraceful?

HILMAR.

Yes, that outsiders should trespass on our preserves in that way. And that one of our own lawyers could lend himself to such a transaction! Now all the profit will go to strangers.

BERNICK.

But this is only a vague rumour.

HILMAR.

People believe it, at any rate; and to-morrow or next day you may look for some editorial comments on the fact. Every one is indignant about it already. I heard several people say that if this rumour is confirmed they will strike their names off the lists.

BERNICK.

Impossible!

HILMAR.

Indeed? Why do you think these peddling creatures were so ready to join you in your undertaking? Do you think they weren't themselves hankering after——?

BERNICK.

Impossible, I say; there is at least so much public spirit in our little community——

HILMAR.

Here? Oh, yes, you are an optimist, and judge

others by yourself. But I am a pretty keen observer, and I tell you there is not a person here—except ourselves, of course—not one, I say, that holds high the banner of the ideal. [*Up towards the back.*] Ugh, there they are!

BERNICK.

Who?

HILMAR.

The two Americans. [*Looks out to the right.*] And who is that with them? Why, it's the captain of the *Indian Girl.* Ugh!

BERNICK.

What can they want with him?

HILMAR.

Oh, it's very appropriate company. They say he has been a slave-dealer or a pirate; and who knows what that couple have turned their hands to in all these years.

BERNICK.

I tell you, such innuendos are utterly unjust.

HILMAR.

Yes, you are an optimist. But here we have them upon us again of course; so I shall get away in time.

[*Goes towards the door on the left.*]

[LONA HESSEL *enters from the right.*]

LONA.

What, Hilmar, am I driving you away?

HILMAR.

Not at all, not at all. I really oughtn't to have been wasting time here; I have something to say to Betty.

[*Goes out by the second door on the left.*]

BERNICK.

[*After a short pause.*] Well, Lona?

LONA.

Well?

BERNICK.

What do you think of me to-day?

LONA.

The same as yesterday; a lie more or less——!

BERNICK.

I must clear all this up. Where has Johan gone to?

LONA.

He will be here directly; he is talking to a man outside there.

BERNICK.

After what you heard yesterday, you can understand that my whole position is ruined if the truth comes to light.

LONA.

I understand.

Bernick.

Of course I need not tell you that *I* was not guilty of the supposed crime.

Lona.

Of course not. But who was the thief?

Bernick.

There was no thief. There was no money stolen; not a halfpenny was missing.

Lona.

What?

Bernick.

Not a halfpenny, I say.

Lona.

But the rumour? How did that shameful rumour get abroad, that Johan——?

Bernick.

Lona, I find I can talk to you as I can to no one else; I shall conceal nothing from you. *I* had my share in spreading the rumour.

Lona.

You! And you could do this wrong to the man who, for your sake——?

Bernick.

You must not condemn me without remembering how matters stood at the time. As I told you

yesterday, I came home to find my mother involved in a whole series of foolish undertakings. Disasters of various kinds followed; all possible ill-luck seemed to crowd in upon us; our house was on the verge of ruin. I was half reckless and half in despair. Lona, I believe it was principally to deaden thought that I got into that entanglement which ended in Johan's going away.

Lona.

Hm——

Bernick.

You can easily imagine that there were all sorts of rumours in the air after you two had left. It was said that this was not his first misdemeanour. Some said Dorf had received a large sum of money from him to hold his tongue and keep out of the way; others declared she had got the money. At the same time it got abroad that our house had difficulty in meeting its engagements. What more natural than that the scandal-mongers should put these two rumours together? Then, as Madam Dorf remained here in unmistakable poverty, people began to say that he had taken the money with him to America; and rumour made the sum larger and larger every day.

Lona.

And you, Karsten——?

Bernick.

I clutched at the rumour as a drowning man clutches at a straw.

LONA.

You helped to spread it?

BERNICK.

I did not contradict it. Our creditors were beginning to press upon us; I had to quiet them—to prevent them from doubting the solidity of the firm. I let it be thought that a momentary misfortune had befallen us, but that if people only refrained from pressing us—if they would only give us time—every one should be paid in full.

LONA.

And every one was paid in full?

BERNICK.

Yes, Lona; that rumour saved our house, and made me the man I am.

LONA.

A lie, then, has made you the man you are.

BERNICK.

Whom did it hurt, then? Johan intended never to return.

LONA.

You ask whom it hurt? Look into yourself and see if it has not hurt you.

BERNICK.

Look into any man you please, and you will find at least one dark spot that must be kept out of sight.

LONA.

And you call yourselves pillars of society!

BERNICK.

Society has none better.

LONA.

Then what does it matter whether such a society is supported or not? What is it that passes current here? Lies and shams—nothing else. Here are you, the first man in the town, prosperous, powerful, looked up to by every one—you, who have set the brand of crime upon an innocent man.

BERNICK.

Do you think I do not feel deeply the wrong I have done him? Do you think I am not prepared to atone for it?

LONA.

How? By speaking out?

BERNICK.

Can you ask me to do that?

LONA.

How else can you atone for such a wrong?

BERNICK.

I am rich, Lona; Johan may ask for what he pleases——

Lona.

Yes, offer him money, and you'll see what he will answer.

Bernick.

Do you know what he intends to do?

Lona.

No. Since yesterday he has said nothing to me. It seems as if all this had suddenly made a full-grown man of him.

Bernick.

I must speak to him.

Lona.

Then here he is.

[Johan Tönnesen *enters from the right.*]

Bernick.

[*Going towards him.*] Johan——!

Johan.

[*Waving him off.*] Let me speak first. Yesterday morning I gave you my word to be silent.

Bernick.

You did.

Johan.

But I did not know then——

Bernick.

Johan, let me in two words explain the circumstances——

Johan.

There is no necessity; I understand the circumstances very well. Your house was in a difficult position; and I was far away, and you had my unprotected name and fame to do what you liked with——. Well, I don't blame you so much for it; we were young and thoughtless in those days. But now I need the truth, and now you must speak out.

Bernick.

And just at this moment I require all my moral authority, and therefore I cannot speak out.

Johan.

I don't care so much about the falsehoods you have trumped up at my expense; it is the other thing that you must take upon your own shoulders. Dina shall be my wife, and I will live here, here in this town, along with her.

Lona.

You will?

Bernick.

With Dina! As your wife? Here, in this town!

Johan.

Yes, just here; I will stay here to outface all these

liars and backbiters. And that I may win her, you must set me free.

BERNICK.

Have you considered that if I plead guilty to the one thing I plead guilty to the other as well? I can prove by our books, you say, that there was no embezzlement at all? But I cannot; our books were not so accurately kept in those days. And even if I could, what would be gained by it? Should I not figure, at best, as the man who, having once saved himself by falsehood, had let that falsehood, and all its consequences, run on for fifteen years, without taking a single step to retract it? You have forgotten what our society is, or you would know that that would crush me to the very dust.

JOHAN.

I can only repeat that I shall make Madam Dorf's daughter my wife, and live with her here, in this town.

BERNICK.

[*Wipes the perspiration from his forehead.*] Hear me, Johan—and you, too, Lona. My position at this moment is not an ordinary one. I am so situated, that if you strike this blow you destroy me utterly, and not only me, but also a great and golden future for the community which was, after all, the home of your childhood.

JOHAN.

And if I do not strike the blow, I destroy all that makes my own future of value to me.

LONA.

Go on, Karsten.

BERNICK.

Then listen. Everything turns upon this question of the railway, and that is not so simple as you think. Of course you have heard that last year there was some talk of a coast-line? It had many powerful advocates in the district, and especially in the press; but I succeeded in blocking it, because it would have injured our steamboat trade along the coast.

LONA.

Have you an interest in this steamboat trade?

BERNICK.

Yes; but no one dared to impugn my motives on that account. My spotless name was an ample safeguard. For that matter, I could have borne the loss; but the town could not. Then the inland line was determined on. As soon as the route was fixed, I assured myself secretly that a branch connection between it and the town was practicable.

LONA.

Why secretly, Karsten?

BERNICK.

Have you heard any talk of the great buying-up of forests, mines, and water-power?

JOHAN.

Yes, for a company in some other town——

BERNICK.

As these properties now lie, they are as good as worthless to their scattered owners; so they have sold comparatively cheap. If the purchaser had waited until the branch line was known to be in contemplation, the vendors would have demanded fancy prices.

LONA.

Very likely; but what then?

BERNICK.

Now comes the point which may or may not be interpreted favourably—a risk which no man in our community could afford to incur, unless he had a spotless and honoured name to rely upon.

LONA.

Well?

BERNICK.

It is I who have bought up the whole.

LONA.

You?

JOHAN.

On your own account?

BERNICK.

On my own account. If the branch line is made, I am a millionaire; if not, I am ruined.

LONA.

This is a great risk, Karsten.

BERNICK.

I have staked all I possess upon the throw.

LONA.

I was not thinking of the money; but when it comes out that——

BERNICK.

Yes, that is the great point. With the unblemished reputation I have hitherto borne, I can take the whole affair upon my shoulders and carry it through, saying to my fellow-citizens, "See, this I have ventured for the good of the community!"

LONA.

Of the community?

BERNICK.

Yes; and not a soul will question my motives.

LONA.

Then there are some people, it seems, who have acted more openly than you, with no private interests, no ulterior designs.

BERNICK.

Who?

LONA.

Why, Rummel and Sandstad and Vigeland, of course.

Bernick.

To make sure of their support, I had to let them into the secret.

Lona.

And they?

Bernick.

They have stipulated for a fifth of the profits.

Lona.

Oh, these pillars of society!

Bernick.

Can you not see that it is society itself that compels us to adopt these indirect courses? What would have happened if I had not acted secretly? Why, every one would have thrown himself into the undertaking, and the whole thing would have been broken up, frittered away, bungled, and ruined. There is not a single man here, except myself, that knows how to organise an enormous concern such as this will become; in this country the men of real business ability are almost all of foreign descent. That is why my conscience acquits me in this matter. Only in my hands can all this property be of permanent benefit to the many whose subsistence will depend upon it.

Lona.

I believe you are right there, Karsten.

JOHAN.

But I know nothing of "the many," and my life's happiness is at stake.

BERNICK.

The welfare of your native place is no less at stake. If things come to the surface which cast a slur upon my past life, all my opponents will join forces and overwhelm me. In our society a boyish error is never effaced. People will scrutinise my whole career, will rake up a thousand trifling incidents, and interpret and comment upon them in the light of these disclosures. They will crush me beneath the weight of rumours and slanders. I shall have to retire from the railway board; and if I take my hand away, the whole thing will fall to pieces, and I shall have to face not only ruin but social extinction.

LONA.

Johan, after what you have heard, you must go away, and say nothing.

BERNICK.

Yes, yes, Johan, you must!

JOHAN.

Yes, I shall go away, and say nothing; but I will come back again, and then I will speak.

BERNICK.

Remain over there, Johan; be silent, and I am ready to share with you——

JOHAN.

Keep your money, and give me back my good name.

BERNICK.

And sacrifice my own!

JOHAN.

You and your "community" must settle that between you. I must and will make Dina my wife. So I shall sail to-morrow in the *Indian Girl*——

BERNICK.

In the *Indian Girl*?

JOHAN.

Yes; the captain has promised to take me. I shall go across, I tell you, sell my farm, and settle up my affairs. In two months I shall be back again.

BERNICK.

And then you will tell all?

JOHAN.

Then the wrong-doer must take upon himself the burden of his wrong-doing.

BERNICK.

Do you forget that I must also take upon me wrong-doing of which I was not guilty?

JOHAN.

Who was it that, fifteen years ago, reaped the benefit of that shameful rumour?

BERNICK.

You drive me to desperation! But if you speak, I shall deny everything! I shall say it is all a conspiracy against me; a piece of revenge; that you have come here to blackmail me!

LONA.

Shame on you, Karsten!

BERNICK.

I am desperate, I tell you; I am fighting for my life. I shall deny everything, everything!

JOHAN.

I have your two letters. I found them in my box among my other papers. I read them through this morning; they are plain enough.

BERNICK.

And you will produce them?

JOHAN.

If you force me to.

BERNICK.

And in two months you will be here again?

JOHAN.

I hope so. The wind is fair. In three weeks I shall be in New York,—if the *Indian Girl* doesn't go to the bottom.

BERNICK.

[*Starting.*] Go to the bottom? Why should the *Indian Girl* go to the bottom?

JOHAN.

That's just what I say.

BERNICK.

[*Almost inaudibly.*] Go to the bottom?

JOHAN.

Well, Bernick, now you know what you have to expect; you must do what you can in the meantime. Good-bye! Give my love to Betty, though she certainly has not received me in a very sisterly fashion. But Martha I must see. She must tell Dina—she must promise me——

[*He goes out by the second door on the left.*]

BERNICK.

[*To himself.*] The *Indian Girl*——? [*Quickly.*] Lona, you must prevent this!

LONA.

You see yourself, Karsten—I have lost all power over him.

[*She follows* JOHAN *into the room on the left.*]

BERNICK.

[*In unquiet thought.*] Go to the bottom——?

[AUNE *enters from the right.*]

AUNE.

Asking your pardon, Consul, might I speak to you——?

BERNICK.

[*Turns angrily.*] What do you want?

AUNE.

I wanted, if I might, to ask you a question, Consul Bernick.

BERNICK.

Well, well; be quick. What is it about?

AUNE.

I wanted to know if you're still determined—firmly determined—to turn me adrift if the *Indian Girl* should not be ready for sea to-morrow?

BERNICK.

What now? The ship will be ready for sea.

AUNE.

Yes—she will. But supposing as she wasn't—should I have to go?

BERNICK.

Why ask such useless questions?

Aune.

I want to make quite sure, Consul. Just answer me: should I have to go?

Bernick.

Am I in the habit of changing my mind?

Aune.

Then to-morrow I should have lost the place that rightly belongs to me in my home and family—lost my influence among the workmen—lost all my chances of helping them as is lowly and downtrodden?

Bernick.

We have discussed that point long ago, Aune.

Aune.

Then the *Indian Girl* must sail.

[*A short pause.*]

Bernick.

Listen: I cannot look after everything myself, and be responsible for everything. I suppose you are prepared to assure me that the repairs are thoroughly carried out?

Aune.

It was very short time you gave me, Consul.

Bernick.

But the repairs are all right, you say?

AUNE.

The weather is fine, and it is midsummer.

[*Another silence.*]

BERNICK.

Have you anything more to say to me?

AUNE.

I don't know as there's aught else, Consul.

BERNICK.

Then—the *Indian Girl* sails——

AUNE.

To-morrow?

BERNICK.

Yes.

AUNE.

Very well.

[*He bows and goes out.*]

[BERNICK *stands for a moment irresolute; then he goes quickly towards the door as if to call* AUNE *back, but stops and stands hesitating with his hand on the knob. At that moment the door is opened from outside, and* KRAP *enters.*]

KRAP.

[*Speaking low.*] Aha, he has been here. Has he confessed?

Bernick.

Hm——; have you discovered anything?

Krap.

What need was there? Did you not see the evil conscience looking out of his very eyes?

Bernick.

Oh, nonsense;—no one can see such things. I asked if you had discovered anything?

Krap.

I couldn't get at it; I was too late; they were busy hauling the ship out of dock. But this very haste proves plainly that——

Bernick.

It proves nothing. The inspection has taken place, then?

Krap.

Of course; but——

Bernick.

There you see! And they have, of course, found nothing to complain of?

Krap.

Consul, you know very well how such inspections are conducted, especially in a yard that has such a name as ours.

Bernick.

No matter; it relieves us of all reproach.

KRAP.

Could you really not read in Aune's face, Consul——?

BERNICK.

Aune has entirely satisfied me, I tell you.

KRAP.

And I tell you I am morally convinced——

BERNICK.

What does this mean, Mr. Krap? I know very well that you have a grudge against the man; but if you want to attack him, you should choose some other opportunity. You know how essential it is for me—or rather for the owners—that the *Indian Girl* should sail to-morrow.

KRAP.

Very well; so be it; but if ever we hear of that ship again—hm!

[VIGELAND *enters from the right.*]

VIGELAND.

How do you do, Consul? Have you a moment to spare?

BERNICK.

At your service, Mr. Vigeland.

VIGELAND.

I only want to know if you agree with me that the *Palm Tree* ought to sail to-morrow?

Bernick.

Yes—I thought that was settled.

Vigeland.

But the captain has just come to tell me that the storm-signals have been hoisted.

Krap.

The barometer has fallen rapidly since this morning.

Bernick.

Indeed? Is a storm threatening?

Vigeland.

A stiff breeze at any rate; but not a contrary wind; quite the reverse——

Bernick.

Hm; what do you say, then?

Vigeland.

I say, as I said to the captain, that the *Palm Tree* is in the hands of Providence. And besides, she is only going over the North Sea to begin with; and freights are pretty high in England just now, so that——

Bernick.

Yes, it would probably mean a loss if we delayed.

Vigeland.

The vessel is soundly built, you know, and fully insured too. I can tell you it's another matter with the *Indian Girl*——

BERNICK.

What do you mean?

VIGELAND.

Why, she is to sail to-morrow too.

BERNICK.

Yes, the owners hurried us on, and besides——

VIGELAND.

Well, if that old hulk can venture out—and with such a crew into the bargain—it would be a shame if we couldn't——

BERNICK.

Well well; I suppose you have the ship's papers with you.

VIGELAND.

Yes, here they are.

BERNICK.

Good; then perhaps you will go with Mr. Krap——

KRAP.

This way, please; we shall soon put them in order.

VIGELAND.

Thanks.—And the result we will leave in the hands of Omnipotence, Consul.

[*He goes with* KRAP *into the foremost room on the left.* DOCTOR RÖRLUND *comes through the garden.*]

RÖRLUND.

What! You at home at this time of the day, Consul!

BERNICK.

[*Absently.*] As you see!

RÖRLUND.

I looked in to see your wife. I thought she might need a word of consolation.

BERNICK.

I daresay she does. But I, too, should be glad of a word with you.

RÖRLUND.

With pleasure, Consul. But what is the matter with you? You look quite pale and upset.

BERNICK.

Indeed? Do I? Well, can you wonder at it, with such a host of things crowding upon me all at once. Besides all my usual business, I have this affair of the railway——. Give me your attention for a moment, Doctor; let me ask you a question.

RÖRLUND.

By all means, Consul.

BERNICK.

A thought has occurred to me lately: When one stands on the threshold of a great undertaking, that is to promote the welfare of thousands,—if a single sacrifice should be demanded——?

RÖRLUND.

How do you mean?

BERNICK.

Take, for example, a man who is starting a large manufactory. He knows very well—for all experience has taught him—that sooner or later, in the working of that manufactory, human life will be lost.

RÖRLUND.

Yes, it is only too probable.

BERNICK.

Or suppose he is about to open a mine. He takes into his service both fathers of families and young men in the heyday of life. May it not be predicted with certainty that some will perish in the undertaking?

RÖRLUND.

Unhappily there can be little doubt of that.

BERNICK.

Well; such a man, then, knows beforehand that his enterprise will undoubtedly, some time or other, lead to the loss of life. But the undertaking is for the greater good of the greater number; for every life it costs, it will, with equal certainty, promote the welfare of many hundreds.

RÖRLUND.

Ah, you are thinking of the railway—of all the dangerous tunnellings, and blastings, and that sort of thing——

Bernick.

Yes—yes, of course—I am thinking of the railway. And, besides, the railway will bring with it both manufactories and mines. But don't you think that——

Rörlund.

My dear Consul, you are almost too scrupulous. If you place the affair in the hands of Providence——

Bernick.

Yes; yes, of course; Providence——

Rörlund.

——you can have nothing to reproach yourself with. Go on and prosper with the railway.

Bernick.

Yes, but let us take a peculiar case. Let us suppose a blasting has to be made at a dangerous place; and unless it is carried out, the railway will come to a standstill. Suppose the engineer knows that it will cost the life of the workman who fires the fuse; but fired it must be, and it is the engineer's duty to send a workman to do it.

Rörlund.

Hm——

Bernick.

I know what you will say: It would be heroic if the engineer himself took the match and went and fired the fuse. But no one does such things. So he must sacrifice a workman.

RÖRLUND.

No engineer among us would ever do that.

BERNICK.

No engineer in the great nations would think twice about doing it.

RÖRLUND.

In the great nations? No, I daresay not. In those corrupt and unscrupulous communities——

BERNICK.

Oh, those communities have their good points too.

RÖRLUND.

Can you say that—you, who yourself——?

BERNICK.

In the great nations one has at least elbow-room for useful enterprise. There, men have the courage to sacrifice something for a great cause. But here, one is hampered by all sorts of petty considerations.

RÖRLUND.

Is a human life a petty consideration?

BERNICK.

When that human life is a menace to the welfare of thousands.

RÖRLUND.

But you are putting quite inconceivable cases, Consul! I don't understand you to-day. And then

you refer me to the great communities. Yes, there —what does a human life count for there? They think no more of staking life than of staking capital. But we, I hope, look at things from an entirely different moral standpoint. Think of our exemplary shipowners! Name me a single merchant here among us who, for the sake of paltry profit, would sacrifice one human life! And then think of those scoundrels in the great communities who enrich themselves by sending out one unseaworthy ship after another——

Bernick.

I am not speaking of unseaworthy ships!

Rörlund.

But I am, Consul.

Bernick.

Yes, but to what purpose? It has nothing to do with the question.—Oh, these little craven qualms of conscience! If a general among us were to lead his troops under fire, and get some of them shot, he would never sleep o' nights after it. Elsewhere it is very different You should hear what he says—— [*Pointing to the door on the left.*]

Rörlund.

He? Who? The American——?

Bernick.

Of course. You should hear how people in America——

RÖRLUND.

Is he in there? Why did you not tell me? I shall go at once——

BERNICK.

It's of no use. You will make no impression on him.

RÖRLUND.

That we shall see. Ah, here he is.

[JOHAN TÖNNESEN *comes from the room on the left.*]

JOHAN.

[*Speaking through the open doorway.*] Yes, yes, Dina, so be it; but don't think that I shall give you up. I shall return, and things will come all right between us.

RÖRLUND.

May I ask what you mean by these words? What is it you want?

JOHAN.

I want the girl to whom you yesterday traduced me, to be my wife.

RÖRLUND.

Your——? Can you imagine that——?

JOHAN.

She shall be my wife.

RÖRLUND.

Well, then, you shall hear—— [*Goes to the half-open door.*] Mrs. Bernick, will you be kind enough

to be a witness—— And you too, Miss Martha And bring Dina with you. [*Sees* LONA.] Ah, are you here, too?

LONA.

[*In the doorway.*] Shall I come?

RÖRLUND.

As many as will—the more the better.

BERNICK.

What are you going to do?

[LONA, MRS. BERNICK, MARTHA, DINA, *and* HILMAR TÖNNESEN *come out of the room on the left.*]

MRS. BERNICK.

Doctor, nothing I can say will stop him from——

RÖRLUND.

I shall stop him, Mrs. Bernick.—Dina, you are a thoughtless girl. But I do not blame you very much. You have stood here too long without the moral support that should have sustained you. I blame myself for not having given you that support sooner.

DINA.

You must not speak now!

MRS. BERNICK.

What is all this?

RÖRLUND.

It is now that I must speak, Dina, though your conduct yesterday and to-day has made it ten times more difficult for me. But all other considerations must give place to your rescue. You remember the promise I gave you. You remember what you promised to answer, when I found that the time had come. Now I can hesitate no longer, and therefore —[*To* JOHAN TÖNNESEN]—I tell you that this girl, whom you are pursuing, is betrothed to me.

MRS. BERNICK.

What do you say?

BERNICK.

Dina!

JOHAN.

She! Betrothed to——?

MARTHA.

No, no, Dina!

LONA.

A lie!

JOHAN.

Dina,—does that man speak the truth?

DINA.

[*After a short pause.*] Yes.

RÖRLUND.

This, I trust, will paralyse all your arts of seduction. The step I have determined to take for Dina's welfare

may now be made known to our whole community. I hope—nay, I am sure—that it will not be misinterpreted. And now, Mrs. Bernick, I think we had better take her away from here, and try to restore her mind to peace and equilibrium.

Mrs. Bernick.

Yes, come. Oh, Dina, what happiness for you!

[*She leads* Dina *out to the left;* Doctor Rörlund *goes along with them.*]

Martha.

Good-bye, Johan!

[*She goes out.*]

Hilmar.

[*At the garden door.*] Hm—well, I really must say——

Lona.

[*Who has been following* Dina *with her eyes.*] Don't be cast down, boy! I shall stay here and look after the Pastor.

[*She goes out to the right.*]

Bernick.

Johan, you won't sail now with the *Indian Girl.*

Johan.

Now more than ever.

Bernick.

Then you will not come back again?

JOHAN.

I shall come back.

BERNICK.

After this? What would you do after this?

JOHAN.

Revenge myself on the whole band of you; crush as many of you as I can.

[*He goes out to the right.* VIGELAND *and* KRAP *come from the Consul's office.*]

VIGELAND.

Well, the papers are in order now, Consul.

BERNICK.

Good, good——

KRAP.

[*In a low voice.*] Then it is settled that the *Indian Girl* is to sail to-morrow.

BERNICK.

She is to sail.

[*He goes into his room.* VIGELAND *and* KRAP *go out to the right.* HILMAR TÖNNESEN *is following them, when* OLAF *peeps cautiously out at the door on the left.*]

OLAF.

Uncle! Uncle Hilmar!

HILMAR.

Ugh, is that you? Why don't you stay upstairs? You know you are under arrest.

OLAF.

[*Comes a few steps forward.*] Sh! Uncle Hilmar, do you know the news?

HILMAR.

I know that you got a thrashing to-day.

OLAF.

[*Looks threateningly towards his father's room.*] He shan't thrash me again. But do you know that Uncle Johan is to sail to-morrow with the Americans?

HILMAR.

What's that to you? You get upstairs again!

OLAF.

Perhaps I may go buffalo-hunting yet, uncle.

HILMAR.

Rubbish! such a young milksop as you——

OLAF.

Just wait a little; you shall hear something to-morrow!

HILMAR.

Little blockhead!

[*He goes out through the garden.* OLAF, *catching sight of* KRAP, *who comes from the right, runs in again and shuts the door.*]

KRAP.

[*Goes up to the Consul's door and opens it a little.*] Excuse my coming again, Consul, but there's a terrible storm brewing.

[*He waits a moment; there is no answer.*] Is the *Indian Girl* to sail in spite of it?

[*After a short pause,*]

BERNICK.

[*Answers from the office.*] The *Indian Girl* is to sail in spite of it.

[KRAP *shuts the door and goes out again to the right.*]

ACT FOURTH.

The garden-room in CONSUL BERNICK'S *house. The table has been removed. It is a stormy afternoon, already half dark, and growing darker.*

[*A man-servant lights the chandelier; two maid-servants bring in flower-pots, lamps, and candles, which are placed on tables and brackets along the wall.* RUMMEL, *wearing a dress-coat, white gloves, and a white necktie, stands in the room giving directions.*]

RUMMEL.

[*To the servant.*] Only every second candle, Jacob. The place mustn't look too brilliant; it's supposed to be a surprise, you know. And all these flowers——? Oh, yes, let them stand; it will seem as if they were there always——

[CONSUL BERNICK *comes out of his room.*]

BERNICK.

[*At the door.*] What is the meaning of all this?

RUMMEL.

Tut, tut, are you there? [*To the servants.*] Yes, you can go now.

[*The servants go out by the second door on the left.*]

BERNICK.

[*Coming into the room.*] Why, Rummel, what is the meaning of all this ?

RUMMEL.

It means that the proudest moment of your life has arrived. The whole town is coming in procession to do homage to its leading citizen.

BERNICK.

What do you mean?

RUMMEL.

With banners and music, sir! We should have had torches too; but it was thought dangerous in this stormy weather. However, there's to be an illumination; and that will have an excellent effect in the newspapers.

BERNICK.

Listen, Rummel—I will have nothing to do with all this.

RUMMEL.

Oh, it's too late now; they'll be here in half-an-hour.

BERNICK.

Why did you not tell me of this before?

RUMMEL.

Just because I was afraid you would make objections. But I arranged it all with your wife; she allowed me to put things in order a little, and she is going to look to the refreshments herself.

Bernick.

[*Listening.*] What's that? Are they coming already? I thought I heard singing.

Rummel.

[*At the garden-door.*] Singing? Oh, it's only the Americans. They are hauling the *Indian Girl* out to the buoy.

Bernick.

Hauling her out! Yes——! I really cannot this evening, Rummel; I am not well.

Rummel.

You're certainly not looking well. But you must pull yourself together. Come, come, man, pull yourself together! I and Sandstad and Vigeland attach the greatest importance to this affair. Our opponents must be crushed by an overwhelming utterance of public opinion. The rumours are spreading over the town; the announcement as to the purchase of the property cannot be kept back any longer. This very evening, amid songs and speeches and the ring of brimming goblets—in short, amid all the effervescent enthusiasm of the occasion—you must announce what you have ventured to do for the good of the community. With the aid of effervescent enthusiasm, as I have just expressed it, it is astonishing what one can effect in this town. But we must have the effervescence, or it won't do.

Bernick.

Yes, yes, yes——

Rummel.

And especially when such a ticklish point is to be dealt with. Thank heaven, you have a name that will carry us through, Bernick. But listen now: we must arrange a little programme. Hilmar Tönnesen has written a song in your honour. It begins charmingly with the line, "Wave th' Ideal's banner high." And Doctor Rörlund has been commissioned to make the speech of the evening. Of course, you must reply to it.

Bernick.

I cannot, I cannot this evening, Rummel. Couldn't you——?

Rummel.

Impossible, much as I should like to. The Doctor's speech will, of course, be mainly addressed to you. Perhaps a few words will be devoted to the rest of us. I have spoken to Vigeland and Sandstad about it. We had arranged that your reply should take the form of a toast to the general welfare of the community. Sandstad will say a few words on the harmony between the different classes of the community; Vigeland will express the fervent hope that our new undertaking may not disturb the moral basis upon which we stand; and I will call attention, in a few well-chosen words, to the claims of Woman, whose more modest exertions are not without their use in the community. But you are not listening——

Bernick.

Yes—yes, I am. Tell me, do you think the sea is running very high outside?

RUMMEL.

Oh, you are anxious on account of the *Palm Tree?* She's well insured, isn't she?

BERNICK.

Yes, insured; but——

RUMMEL.

And in good repair; that's the main thing.

BERNICK.

Hm.—And even if anything happens to a vessel, it does not follow that lives will be lost. The ship and cargo may go down—people may lose chests and papers——

RUMMEL.

Good gracious, chests and papers don't matter much——

BERNICK.

Not matter! No, no, I only meant—— Hark—that singing again!

RUMMEL.

It's on board the *Palm Tree.*

[VIGELAND *enters from the right.*]

VIGELAND.

Yes, they are hauling out the *Palm Tree.* Good evening, Consul.

BERNICK.

And you, who know the sea so well, don't hesitate to——?

VIGELAND.

I don't hesitate to trust in Providence, Consul! Besides, I have been on board and distributed a few leaflets, which I hope will act with a blessing.

[SANDSTAD *and* KRAP *enter from the right.*]

SANDSTAD.

[*At the door.*] It's a miracle if they manage to pull through. Ah, here we are—good evening, good evening.

BERNICK.

Is anything the matter, Mr. Krap?

KRAP.

I have nothing to say, Consul.

SANDSTAD.

Every man on board the *Indian Girl* is drunk. If those animals ever get over alive, I'm no prophet.

[LONA *enters from the right.*]

LONA.

[*To* BERNICK.] Johan told me to say good-bye for him.

BERNICK.

Is he on board already?

LONA.

He will be soon, at any rate. We parted outside the hotel.

BERNICK.

And he holds to his purpose?

LONA.

Firm as a rock.

RUMMEL.

[*At one of the windows.*] Deuce take these new-fangled arrangements. I can't get these curtains drawn.

LONA.

Are they to be drawn? I thought, on the contrary——

RUMMEL.

They are to be drawn at first, Miss Hessel. Of course you know what is going on?

LONA.

Oh, of course. Let me help you. [*Takes one of the cords.*] I shall let the curtain fall upon my brother-in-law—though I would rather raise it.

RUMMEL.

That you can do later. When the garden is filled with a surging multitude, then the curtains are drawn back, and reveal an astonished and delighted family. A citizen's home should be transparent to all the world.

[BERNICK *seems about to say something, but turns quickly and goes into his office.*]

RUMMEL.

Well, let us hold our last council of war. Come, Mr. Krap; we want you to supply us with a few facts.

[*All the men go into the Consul's office.* LONA *has drawn all the curtains over the windows, and is just going to draw the*

curtain over the open glass door, when Olaf *drops down from above, alighting at the top of the garden stair; he has a plaid over his shoulder and a bundle in his hand.*]

Lona.

Good heavens, child, how you startled me!

Olaf.

[*Hiding the bundle.*] Sh, auntie!

Lona.

Why did you jump out at the window?—Where are you going?

Olaf.

Sh, don't tell, auntie. I'm going to Uncle Johan; only down to the pier, you know;—just to say good-bye to him. Good-night, auntie!

[*He runs out through the garden.*]

Lona.

No! stop! Olaf—Olaf!

[Johan Tönnesen, *in travelling dress, with a bag over his shoulder, steals in by the door on the right.*]

Johan.

Lona!

Lona.

[*Turning.*] What! You here again?

JOHAN.

There are still a few minutes to spare. I must see her once more. We cannot part so.

[MARTHA *and* DINA, *both wearing cloaks, and the latter with a small travelling-bag in her hand, enter by the second door on the left.*]

DINA.

I must see him! I must see him!

MARTHA.

Yes, you shall go to him, Dina!

DINA.

There he is!

JOHAN.

Dina!

DINA.

Take me with you!

JOHAN.

What——!

LONA.

You will go?

DINA.

Yes, take me with you. The other has written to me, saying that this evening it is to be announced to every one——

JOHAN.

Dina—you do not love him?

DINA.

I have never loved that man. I would rather be at the bottom of the fjord than be engaged to him! Oh, how he seemed to make me grovel before him yesterday with his patronising phrases! How he made me feel that he was stooping to an abject creature! I will not be looked down upon any more. I will go away. May I come with you?

JOHAN.

Yes, yes—a thousand times yes!

DINA.

I shall not be a burden on you long. Only help me over there; help me to make a start——

JOHAN.

Hurrah! We shall manage all that, Dina!

LONA.

[*Pointing to the Consul's door.*] Hush; not so loud!

JOHAN.

Dina, I will take such care of you!

DINA.

No, no, I won't have that. I will make my own way; I shall manage well enough over there. Only let me get away from here. Oh, those women—you don't know—they have actually written to me to-day, exhorting me to appreciate my good fortune, impressing upon me what magnanimity he has shown.

To-morrow, and every day of my life, they would be watching me to see whether I showed myself worthy of it all. I have a horror of all this propriety!

JOHAN.

Tell me, Dina, is that your only reason for coming? Am I nothing to you?

DINA.

Yes, Johan, you are more to me than any one else in the world.

JOHAN.

Oh, Dina—!

DINA.

They all tell me that I must hate and detest you; that it is my duty. But I don't understand all this about duty; I never could understand it.

LONA.

And you never shall, my child!

MARTHA.

No, you shall not; and that is why you must go with him, as his wife.

JOHAN

Yes, yes!

LONA.

What? I must kiss you for that, Martha! I didn't expect this of you.

MARTHA.

No, I daresay not; I didn't expect it myself. But sooner or later the crisis was bound to come. Oh, how we suffer here, under this tyranny of custom and convention! Rebel against it, Dina! Marry him. Show that it is possible to set this use-and-wont at defiance!

JOHAN.

What is your answer, Dina?

DINA.

Yes, I will be your wife.

JOHAN.

Dina!

DINA.

But first I will work, and become something for myself, just as you are. I will give myself; I will not be simply taken.

LONA.

Right, right! So it should be.

JOHAN.

Good; I shall wait and hope——

LONA.

——and win too, boy! But now, on board.

JOHAN.

Yes, on board! Ah, Lona, my dear, a word with you; come here——

[*He leads her up towards the back and talks rapidly to her.*]

MARTHA.

Dina,—happy girl! Let me look at you and kiss you once more—for the last time.

DINA.

Not the last time; no, my dear, dear aunt—we shall meet again.

MARTHA.

Never! Promise me, Dina, never to come back again. [*Seizes both her hands and looks into her face.*] Now go to your happiness, my dear child—over the sea. Oh, how often have I sat in the school-room and longed to be over there! It must be beautiful there; the heaven is wider; the clouds sail higher than here; a larger, freer air sweeps over the heads of the people——

DINA.

Oh, Aunt Martha, you will follow us some day.

MARTHA.

I? Never, never. My little life-work lies here, and now I think I can give myself to it wholly and unreservedly.

DINA.

I cannot imagine being parted from you.

MARTHA.

Ah, one can part from so much, Dina. [*Kisses her.*] But you will not have to learn that lesson, my dear child. Promise me to make him happy.

DINA.

I will not promise anything. I hate this promising. Things must come as they can.

MARTHA.

Yes, yes, you are right. You have only to remain as you are—true and faithful to yourself.

DINA.

That I will, Aunt Martha.

LONA.

[*Puts in her pocket some papers which Johan has given her.*] Good, good, my dear boy. But now, away.

JOHAN.

Yes, now there's no time to be lost. Good-bye, Lona; thanks, thanks for all you have been to me. Good-bye, Martha, and thanks to you too for your faithful friendship.

MARTHA.

Good-bye, Johan! Good-bye, Dina! And happiness be over all your days!

[*She and* LONA *hurry them towards the door in the background.* JOHAN TÖNNESEN

and Dina *go quickly out through the garden.* Lona *shuts the door and draws the curtain.*]

Lona.

Now we are alone, Martha. You have lost her, and I him.

Martha.

You—him?

Lona.

Oh, I had half lost him already over there. The boy longed to stand on his own feet; so I made him imagine that *I* was suffering from home-sickness.

Martha.

That was it? Now I understand why you came. But he will want you back again, Lona.

Lona.

An old step-sister—what can he want with her now? Men break many a tie when happiness beckons to them.

Martha.

That is true, sometimes.

Lona.

Now we two must hold together, Martha.

Martha.

Can I be anything to you?

LONA.

Who more? We two foster-mothers—have we not both lost our children? Now we are alone.

MARTHA.

Yes, alone. So now I will tell you this—I have loved him more than all the world.

LONA.

Martha? [*Seizes her arm.*] Is this the truth?

MARTHA.

My whole life lies in the words. I have loved him, and waited for him. From summer to summer I have looked for his coming. And then he came—but he did not see me.

LONA.

Loved him! And it was you that gave his happiness into his hands.

MARTHA.

What else should I do, since I love him? Yes, I have loved him. I have lived my whole life for him, ever since he went away. What reason had I to hope, you ask? Oh, I think I had some reason. But then, when he came again—it seemed as if everything were wiped out of his memory. He did not see me.

LONA.

It was Dina that overshadowed you, Martha.

Martha.

It is well that she did. When he went away we were of the same age; when I saw him again—oh, that horrible moment—I realised that I was ten years older than he. He had lived out there in the bright, quivering sunshine, and drunk in youth and health at every breath; and here sat I the while, spinning and spinning——

Lona.

——the thread of his happiness, Martha.

Martha.

Yes, it was gold I spun. No bitterness! We have been two good sisters to him, Lona, have we not?

Lona.

[*Embraces her.*] Martha!

[Consul Bernick *comes out of his room.*]

Bernick.

[*To the men inside.*] Yes, yes, settle it as you please. When the time comes, I shall be ready—— [*Shuts the door.*] Ah, are you there? By-the-bye, Martha, you had better look to your dress a little. And tell Betty to do the same. I don't want anything out of the way, of course; just homely neatness. But you must be quick.

Lona.

And you must look bright and happy, Martha; remember this is a joyful surprise to you.

BERNICK.

Olaf must come down too. I will have him at my side.

LONA.

Hm, Olaf——

MARTHA.

I will tell Betty.

[*She goes out by the second door on the left.*]

LONA.

Well, so the great and solemn hour has come.

BERNICK.

[*Walks restlessly up and down.*] Yes, it has come.

LONA.

At such a time, no doubt, a man must feel proud and happy.

BERNICK.

[*Looks at her.*] Hm——

LONA.

The whole town is to be illuminated, I hear.

BERNICK.

Yes, I believe there is some such idea.

LONA.

All the clubs will turn out with their banners. Your name will shine in letters of fire. To-night it will be telegraphed to every corner of the country—

"Surrounded by his happy family, Consul Bernick received the homage of his fellow-citizens as one of the pillars of society."

Bernick.

So it will; and the crowd in the street will shout and hurrah, and insist on my coming forward into the doorway there, and I shall have to bow and thank them.

Lona.

Have to——?

Bernick.

Do you think I feel happy at this moment?

Lona.

No, *I* do not think that you can feel altogether happy.

Bernick.

Lona, you despise me.

Lona.

Not yet.

Bernick.

And you have no right to. Not to despise me! —Lona, you cannot conceive how unspeakably alone I stand, here in this narrow, stunted society—how, year by year, I have had to put a tighter curb on my ambition for a full and satisfying life-work. What have I accomplished, for all the show it makes? Scrap-work—odds and ends. There is no room here for other and larger work. If I tried to go a step in

advance of the views and ideas of the day, all my power was gone. Do you know what we are, we, who are reckoned the pillars of society? We are the tools of society, neither more nor less.

Lona.

Why do you only see this now?

Bernick.

Because I have been thinking much of late—since you came home—and most of all this evening.—Oh, Lona, why did I not know you through and through, then—in the old days?

Lona.

What then?

Bernick.

I should never have given you up; and, if I had had you, I should not have stood where I stand now.

Lona

And do you never think what she might have been to you—she, whom you chose in my stead?

Bernick.

I know, at any rate, that she has not been anything that I required.

Lona.

Because you have never shared your life-work with her. Because you have never placed her in a free and true relation to you. Because you have allowed

her to go on pining under the weight of shame you had cast upon those nearest her.

Bernick.

Yes, yes, yes; falsehood and hollowness are at the bottom of it all.

Lona.

Then why not break with all this falsehood and hollowness?

Bernick.

Now? It is too late now, Lona.

Lona.

Karsten, tell me—what satisfaction does this show and imposture give you?

Bernick.

It gives me none. I must go under, along with the whole of this bungled social system. But a new generation will grow up after us; it is my son that I am working for; it is his life-work that I am laying out for him. There will come a time when truth will find its way into our social order, and upon it he shall found a happier life than his father's.

Lona.

With a lie for its groundwork? Think what it is you are giving your son for an inheritance.

Bernick.

[*With suppressed despair.*] I am giving him an inheritance a thousand times worse than you know of.

But, sooner or later, the curse must pass away. And yet—and yet—— [*Vehemently.*] How could you bring all this upon my head! But it is done now. I must go on now. You shall not succeed in crushing me!

[Hilmar Tönnesen, *with an open note in his hand, and much discomposed, enters quickly from the right.*]

Hilmar.

Why, this is——. Betty, Betty!

Bernick.

What now? Are they coming already?

Hilmar.

No, no; but I must speak to some one at once——
[*He goes out by the second door on the left.*]

Lona.

Karsten, you say we came to crush you. Then let me tell you what stuff he is made of, this prodigal whom your moral society shrinks from as if he were plague-stricken. He can do without you all, for he has gone away.

Bernick.

But he is coming back——

Lona.

Johan will never come back. He has gone for ever, and Dina has gone with him.

BERNICK.

Gone for ever? And Dina with him?

LONA.

Yes, to be his wife. That is how these two strike your seraphic society in the face, as I once—— No matter!

BERNICK.

Gone!—she too! In the *Indian Girl?*

LONA.

No; he dared not entrust such a precious freight to a ship with so ruffianly a crew. Johan and Dina have sailed in the *Palm Tree.*

BERNICK.

Ah! Then it was—to no purpose——. [*Rushes to the door of his office, tears it open, and calls in.*] Krap, stop the *Indian Girl!* She mustn't sail to-night!

KRAP.

[*Inside.*] The *Indian Girl* is already standing out to sea, Consul.

BERNICK.

[*Shuts the door, and says feebly.*] Too late—and all for nothing.

LONA.

What do you mean?

BERNICK.

Nothing, nothing. Leave me alone——!

LONA.

Hm. Listen, Karsten. Johan told me to tell you that he leaves in my keeping the good name he once lent you, and also that which you stole from him while he was far away. Johan will be silent; and I can do or let alone in this matter as I will. See, I hold in my hand your two letters.

BERNICK.

You have them! And now—now you will—this very night perhaps—when the procession——

LONA.

I did not come here to unmask you, but to try if I could not move you to throw off the mask of your own accord. I have failed. Remain standing in the lie. See; I tear your two letters to shreds. Take the pieces; here they are. Now, there is nothing to bear witness against you, Karsten. Now you are safe; be happy too—if you can.

BERNICK.

[*Profoundly moved.*] Lona, why did you not do this before! It is too late now; my whole life is ruined now; I cannot live after to-day.

LONA.

What has happened?

BERNICK.

Don't ask me. And yet I must live! I will live—for Olaf's sake. He shall restore all and atone for all——

LONA.

Karsten——!

[HILMAR TÖNNESEN *again enters hurriedly.*]

HILMAR.

No one to be found; all away; not even Betty!

BERNICK.

What is the matter with you?

HILMAR.

I daren't tell you.

BERNICK.

What is it? You must and shall tell me.

HILMAR.

Well then—— Olaf has run away in the *Indian Girl.*

BERNICK.

[*Staggering backwards.*] Olaf—in the *Indian Girl!* No, no!

LONA.

Yes, it is true! Now I understand—— I saw him jump out of the window.

BERNICK.

[*At the door of his room, calls out in despair.*] Krap, stop the *Indian Girl* at any cost!

KRAP.

[*Comes into the room.*] Impossible, Consul. How should we be able to——

BERNICK.

We must stop her! Olaf is on board!

KRAP.

What!

RUMMEL.

[*Enters from the office.*] Olaf run away? Impossible!

SANDSTAD.

[*Enters from the office.*] They'll send him back with the pilot, Consul.

HILMAR.

No, no; he has written to me. [*Showing the letter.*] He says he's going to hide among the cargo until they are fairly out to sea.

BERNICK.

I shall never see him again!

RUMMEL.

Oh, nonsense; a good stout ship, newly repaired——

VIGELAND.

[*Who has also come in.*] ——and in your own yard, too, Consul.

Bernick.

I shall never see him again, I tell you. I have lost him, Lona; and—I see it now—he has never been really mine. [*Listens.*] What is that?

Rummel.

Music. The procession is coming.

Bernick.

I cannot, I will not see any one!

Rummel.

What are you thinking of? It's impossible——

Sandstad.

Impossible, Consul; think how much you have at stake.

Bernick.

What does it all matter to me now? Whom have I now to work for?

Rummel.

Can you ask? You have us and society.

Vigeland.

Yes, very true.

Sandstad.

And surely, Consul, you don't forget that we——

[Martha *enters by the second door on the left. Music is heard, from far down the street.*]

MARTHA.

Here comes the procession; but Betty is not at home; I can't think where she——

BERNICK.

Not at home! There you see, Lona; no support either in joy or sorrow.

RUMMEL.

Back with the curtains! Come and help me, Mr. Krap! You too, Sandstad! What a terrible pity that the family should be scattered just at this moment! Quite against the programme.

[*The curtains over the door and windows are drawn back. The whole street is seen to be illuminated. On the house opposite is a large transparency with the inscription*, "Long live Karsten Bernick, the Pillar of our Society!"]

BERNICK.

[*Shrinking back.*] Away with all this! I will not look at it! Out with it, out with it!

RUMMEL.

Are you in your senses, may I ask?

MARTHA.

What is the matter with him, Lona?

LONA.

Hush! [*Whispers to her.*]

Bernick.

Away with the mocking words, I say! Can you not see, all these lights are gibing at us?

Rummel.

Well, I must say——

Bernick.

Oh, you know nothing——! But I, I——! They are the lights in a dead-room!

Krap.

Hm——!

Rummel.

Come now, really—you make far too much of it.

Sandstad.

The boy will have a trip over the Atlantic, and then you'll have him back again.

Vigeland.

Only put your trust in the Almighty, Consul.

Rummel.

And in the ship, Bernick; she's seaworthy enough, I'm sure.

Krap.

Hm——

Rummel.

Now, if it were one of those floating coffins we hear of in the great nations——

BERNICK.

I can feel my very hair growing grey.

[MRS. BERNICK, *with a large shawl over her head, comes through the garden door.*]

MRS. BERNICK.

Karsten, Karsten, do you know——?

BERNICK.

Yes, I know——; but you—you who can see nothing—you who have not a mother's care for him——!

MRS. BERNICK.

Oh, listen to me——!

BERNICK.

Why did you not watch over him? Now I have lost him. Give him back to me, if you can!

MRS. BERNICK.

I can, I can; I have him!

BERNICK.

You have him!

THE MEN.

Ah!

HILMAR.

Ah, I thought so.

MARTHA.

Now you have him again, Karsten!

Lona.

Yes; now win him as well.

Bernick.

You have him! Can this be true? Where is he?

Mrs. Bernick.

I shall not tell you until you have forgiven him.

Bernick.

Oh, forgiven, forgiven——! But how did you come to know——?

Mrs. Bernick.

Do you think a mother has no eyes? I was in mortal terror lest you should hear of it. A few words he let fall yesterday——; and his room being empty, and his knapsack and clothes gone——

Bernick.

Yes, yes——?

Mrs. Bernick.

I ran; I got hold of Aune; we went out in his sailing-boat; the American ship was on the point of sailing. Thank Heaven, we arrived in time—we got on board—we searched in the hold—and we found him. Oh, Karsten, you mustn't punish him!

Bernick.

Betty!

Mrs. Bernick.

Nor Aune either!

Bernick.

Aune? What of him? Is the *Indian Girl* under sail again?

Mrs. Bernick.

No, that is just the thing——

Bernick.

Speak, speak!

Mrs. Bernick.

Aune was as terrified as I was; the search took some time; darkness came on, and the pilot made objections; so Aune ventured—in your name——

Bernick.

Well?

Mrs. Bernick.

To stop the ship till to-morrow.

Krap.

Hm——

Bernick.

Oh, what unspeakable happiness!

Mrs. Bernick.

You are not angry?

Bernick.

Oh, what surpassing happiness, Betty!

RUMMEL.

Why, you're absurdly nervous.

HILMAR.

Yes ; the moment it comes to a little struggle with the elements—ugh !

KRAP.

[*At the window.*] The procession is coming through the garden gate, Consul.

BERNICK.

Yes, now let them come !

RUMMEL.

The whole garden is full of people.

SANDSTAD.

The very street is packed.

RUMMEL.

The whole town has turned out, Bernick. This is really an inspiring moment.

VIGELAND.

Let us take it in a humble spirit, Mr. Rummel.

RUMMEL.

All the banners are out. What a procession ! Ah, here's the Committee, with Doctor Rörlund at its head.

BERNICK.

Let them come, I say!

RUMMEL.

But look here: in your agitated state of mind——

BERNICK.

What then?

RUMMEL.

Why, I should have no objection to speaking for you.

BERNICK.

No, thank you; to-night I shall speak myself.

RUMMEL.

But do you know what you have got to say?

BERNICK.

Yes, don't be alarmed, Rummel—now I know what I have to say.

[*The music has meanwhile ceased. The garden door is thrown open.* DOCTOR RÖRLUND *enters at the head of the Committee, accompanied by two porters, carrying a covered basket. After them come townspeople of all classes, as many as the room will hold. An immense crowd, with banners and flags, can be seen in the garden and in the street.*]

Rörlund.

Consul Bernick! I see from the surprise depicted in your countenance, that it is as unexpected guests that we intrude upon you in your happy family-circle, at your peaceful hearth, surrounded by upright and public-spirited friends and fellow-citizens. Our excuse is that we obey a heartfelt impulse in bringing you our homage. It is not, indeed, the first time we have done so, but the first time on so comprehensive a scale. We have often expressed to you our gratitude for the broad moral basis upon which you have, so to speak, built up our society. This time we chiefly hail in you the clear-sighted, indefatigable, unselfish, nay, self-sacrificing citizen, who has taken the initiative in an undertaking which, we are credibly assured, will give a powerful impetus to the temporal prosperity and well-being of this community.

Voices.

[*Among the crowd.*] Bravo, bravo!

Rörlund.

Consul Bernick, you have for many years stood before our town as a shining example. I do not here speak of your exemplary domestic life, your spotless moral record. To such virtues we pay tribute in the secret chamber of the heart; we do not proclaim them from the house-tops. I speak rather of your activity as a citizen, as it lies open to all men's view. Well-appointed ships sail from your wharves, and fly our flag on the furthest seas. A large and prosperous body of workmen looks up to you as to a father. By

calling into existence new branches of industry, you have brought comfort into hundreds of homes. In other words—you are in an eminent sense the pillar and corner-stone of this community.

Voices.

Hear, hear! Bravo!

Rörlund.

And it is the halo of disinterestedness resting upon all your actions that is so unspeakably beneficent, especially in these times. You are now on the point of procuring for us—I do not hesitate to say the word plainly and prosaically—a railway.

Many Voices.

Bravo! bravo!

Rörlund.

But this undertaking seems destined to meet with difficulties, principally arising from narrow and selfish interests.

Voices.

Hear, hear! Hear, hear!

Rörlund.

It is no longer unknown that certain individuals, not belonging to our community, have stolen a march upon the energetic citizens of this place, and have secured certain advantages, which should by rights have fallen to the share of our own town.

Voices.

Yes, yes! Hear, hear!

Rörlund.

You are of course not unaware of this deplorable circumstance, Consul Bernick. But, nevertheless, you steadily pursue your undertaking, well knowing that a patriotic citizen must not be exclusively concerned with the interests of his own parish.

Different Voices.

Hm! No, no! Yes, yes!

Rörlund.

We have assembled, then, this evening to do homage, in your person, to the ideal citizen—the model of all the civic virtues. May your enterprise contribute to the true and lasting welfare of this community! The railway is, no doubt, an institution by means of which elements of evil may be imported from without, but it is also an institution that enables us to get quickly rid of them. From elements of evil from without we cannot even now keep ourselves quite free. But if, as I hear, we have, just on this auspicious evening, been unexpectedly disembarrassed of certain elements of this nature——

Voices.

Sh, sh!

Rörlund.

——I accept the fact as a good omen for the undertaking. If I touch upon this point here, it is

because we know ourselves to be in a house where family ties are subordinated to the ethical ideal.

VOICES.

Hear, hear! Bravo!

BERNICK.

[*At the same time.*] Permit me——

RÖRLUND.

Only a few words more, Consul Bernick. Your labours on behalf of this community have certainly not been undertaken in the hope of any tangible reward. But you cannot reject a slight token of your grateful fellow-citizens' appreciation, least of all on this momentous occasion, when, as practical men assure us, we are standing on the threshold of a new era.

MANY VOICES.

Bravo! Hear, hear! Hear, hear!

[*He gives the porters a sign; they bring forward the basket; members of the Committee take out and present, during the following speech, the articles mentioned.*]

RÖRLUND.

Therefore, I have now, Consul Bernick, to hand you a silver coffee service. Let it grace your board when we in future, as so often in the past, have the pleasure of meeting under this hospitable roof.

And you, too, gentlemen, who have so zealously co-operated with the first man of our community, we

would beg to accept some trifling mementos. This silver goblet we tender to you, Mr. Rummel. You have many a time, amid the ring of wine-cups, done battle in eloquent words for the civic interests of our community; may you often find worthy opportunities to lift and drain this goblet.—To you, Mr. Sandstad, I hand this album, with photographs of your fellow-citizens. Your well-known and much-appreciated philanthropy has placed you in the happy position of counting among your friends members of all sections of the community.—And to you, Mr. Vigeland, I have to offer, for the decoration of your domestic sanctum, this book of family devotion, on vellum, and luxuriously bound. Under the ripening influence of years, you have come to view life from a serious standpoint; your activity in the daily affairs of this world has long been purified and ennobled by thoughts of things higher and holier. [*Turns towards the Crowd.*] And now, my friends, long live Consul Bernick and his fellow-workers! Hurrah for the Pillars of Society!

THE WHOLE CROWD.

Long live Consul Bernick! Long live the Pillars of Society! Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!

LONA.

I congratulate you, brother-in-law!

[*An expectant silence intervenes.*]

BERNICK.

[*Begins earnestly and slowly.*] My fellow-citizens,

—your spokesman has said that we stand this evening on the threshold of a new era; and there, I hope, he was right. But in order that it may be so, we must bring home to ourselves the truth—the truth which has, until this evening, been utterly and in all things banished from our community.

[*Astonishment among the audience.*]

Bernick.

I must begin by repudiating the panegyric with which you, Doctor Rörlund, according to use and wont on such occasions, have overwhelmed me. I do not deserve it; for until to-day I have not been disinterested in my dealings. If I have not always striven for pecuniary profit, at least I am now conscious that a desire, a craving, for power, influence, and respect has been the motive of most of my actions.

Rummel.

[*Half aloud.*] What next?

Bernick.

Before my fellow-citizens I do not reproach myself for this; for I still believe that I may claim a place among the foremost of our men of practical usefulness.

Many Voices.

Yes, yes, yes!

Bernick.

What I do blame myself for is my weakness in

constantly adopting indirect courses, because I knew and feared the tendency of our society to suspect impure motives behind everything a man undertakes. And now I come to a case in point.

Rummel.

[*Anxiously.*] Hm—hm!

Bernick.

There are rumours abroad of great purchases of property along the projected line. This property I have bought—all of it—I alone.

Suppressed Voices.

What does he say? The Consul? Consul Bernick?

Bernick.

It is for the present in my hands. Of course, I have confided in my fellow-workers, Messrs. Rummel, Vigeland, and Sandstad, and we have agreed to——

Rummel.

It's not true! Prove!—prove——!

Vigeland.

We have not agreed to anything!

Sandstad.

Well, I must say——

BERNICK.

Quite right; we have not yet agreed on what I was about to mention. But I am confident that these three gentlemen will acquiesce when I say that I have this evening determined to form a joint-stock company for the exploitation of these properties; whoever will can have shares in it.

MANY VOICES.

Hurrah! Long live Consul Bernick!

RUMMEL.

[*Aside to* BERNICK.] Such base treachery——!

SANDSTAD.

[*Likewise.*] Then you've been fooling us——!

VIGELAND.

Why then, devil take——! Oh, Lord, what am I saying!

THE CROWD.

[*Outside.*] Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!

BERNICK.

Silence, gentlemen. I have no right to this homage; for what I have now determined was not my original intention. My intention was to retain the whole myself; and I am still of opinion that the property can be most profitably worked if it remains in the control of one man. But it is for the shareholders to choose.

If they wish it, I am willing to manage it for them to the best of my ability.

VOICES.

Yes, yes, yes!

BERNICK

But, first, my fellow-citizens must know me to the core. Then let every one look into his own heart, and let us realise the prediction, that from this evening we begin a new era. The old, with its tinsel, its hypocrisy and hollowness, its sham propriety, and its despicable cowardice, shall lie behind us like a museum, open for instruction; and to this museum we will present—will we not, gentlemen?—the coffee service, and the goblet, and the album, and the family devotions on vellum and luxuriously bound.

RUMMEL.

Yes, of course.

VIGELAND.

[*Mutters.*] When you've taken all the rest, why——

SANDSTAD.

As you please.

BERNICK.

And now to come to the chief point in my settlement with society. It has been said that elements of evil have left us this evening. I can add what you do not know: the man thus alluded to did not go alone; with him went, to become his wife——

Lona

[*Loudly.*] Dina Dorf!

Rörlund.

What?

Mrs. Bernick.

What do you say?

[*Great sensation.*]

Rörlund.

Fled? Run away—with h i m! Impossible!

Bernick.

To become his wife, Doctor Rörlund. And I have more to add. [*Aside.*] Betty, collect yourself to bear what is coming. [*Aloud.*] I say: Honour to that man, for he has nobly taken upon himself another's sin. My fellow citizens, I will get clear of the lie; it has gone near to poisoning every fibre in my being. You shall know all. Fifteen years ago, it was *I* who sinned.

Mrs. Bernick.

[*In a low and trembling voice.*] Karsten!

Martha.

[*Likewise.*] Ah, Johan——!

Lona.

At last you have found your true self!

[*Speechless astonishment among the listeners.*]

BERNICK.

Yes, my fellow-citizens, I was guilty, and he fled. The false and vile rumours which were afterwards current, it is now in no human power to disprove. But of this I cannot complain. Fifteen years ago I swung myself aloft by aid of these rumours; whether I am now to fall with them is for you to decide.

RÖRLUND.

What a thunderbolt! The first man in the town——! [*Softly to* MRS. BERNICK.] Oh, how I pity you, Mrs. Bernick!

HILMAR.

Such a confession! Well, I must say——!

BERNICK.

But do not decide this evening. I ask every one of you to go home—to collect himself—to look into himself. When your minds are calm again, it will be seen whether I have lost or gained by speaking out. Good-night! I have still much, very much, to repent of, but that concerns only my own conscience. Good-night! Away with all this show! We all feel that it is out of place here.

RÖRLUND.

Assuredly it is. [*Softly to* MRS. BERNICK.] Run away! So, after all, she was quite unworthy of me. [*Half aloud, to the Committee.*] Yes, gentlemen, after

this I think we had better withdraw as quickly as possible.

HILMAR.

How, after this, one is to hold high the banner of the ideal, I for one——. Ugh!

[*The announcement has meanwhile been whispered from mouth to mouth. All the members of the procession retire through the garden.* RUMMEL, SANDSTAD, *and* VIGELAND *go off disputing earnestly but softly.* HILMAR TÖNNESEN *slips out to the right.* CONSUL BERNICK, MRS. BERNICK, MARTHA, LONA, *and* KRAP *alone remain in the room. There is a short silence.*]

BERNICK.

Betty, can you forgive me?

MRS. BERNICK.

[*Looks smilingly at him.*] Do you know, Karsten, you have made me feel happier and more hopeful than I have felt for many years?

BERNICK.

How so?

MRS. BERNICK.

For many years I have thought that you had once been mine, and I had lost you. Now I know that you never were mine; but I shall win you.

BERNICK.

[*Embracing her.*] Oh, Betty, you have won me! Through Lona I have at last learned really to know you. But now let Olaf come.

MRS. BERNICK.

Yes, now you shall have him. Mr. Krap——!

[*She whispers to him in the background. He goes out by the garden door. During the following all the transparencies and lights in the houses are extinguished one by one.*]

BERNICK.

[*Softly.*] Thanks, Lona; you have saved what is best in me—and for me.

LONA.

What else did I intend?

BERNICK.

Yes, what—what did you intend? I cannot fathom you.

LONA.

Hm——

BERNICK.

It was not hatred then? Not revenge? Why did you come over?

LONA.

Old friendship does not rust.

BERNICK.

Lona!

LONA.

When Johan told me all that about the lie, I swore to myself: The hero of my youth shall stand free and true.

BERNICK.

Oh, how little has a pitiful creature like me deserved this of you!

LONA.

Yes, if we women always asked for deserts, Karsten——!

[AUNE *and* OLAF *enter from the garden.*]

BERNICK.

[*Rushing to him.*] Olaf!

OLAF.

Father, I promise never to do it again.

BERNICK.

To run away?

OLAF.

Yes, yes, I promise, father.

BERNICK.

And I promise that you shall never have reason to.

In future you shall be allowed to grow up, not as the heir to my life-work, but as one who has a life-work of his own to look forward to.

OLAF.

And will you let me be whatever I want to?

BERNICK.

Whatever you like.

OLAF.

Thank you, father. Then I won't be a pillar of society.

BERNICK.

Ah? Why not?

OLAF.

Oh, I think it must be so tiresome.

BERNICK.

You shall be yourself, Olaf; and we won't trouble about anything else. And you, Aune——

AUNE.

I know it, Consul; I am dismissed.

BERNICK.

We will not part company, Aune; and forgive me——

AUNE.

What? The ship can't get away to night.

BERNICK.

Nor yet to-morrow. I gave you too little time. She must be overhauled more thoroughly.

AUNE.

She shall be, Consul,—and with the new machines!

BERNICK.

So be it—but thoroughly and honestly, mind. There are a good many things here that need thorough and honest overhauling. So good-night, Aune.

AUNE.

Good-night, Consul—and thank you heartily.

[*He goes out to the right.*]

MRS. BERNICK.

Now they are all gone.

BERNICK.

And we are alone. My name no longer shines in the transparencies; all the lights are out in the windows.

LONA.

Would you have them lighted again?

BERNICK.

Not for all the world. Where have I been? You will be horrified when you know. I am feeling now as if I had just come to my senses again after

being poisoned. But I feel—I feel that I can be young and strong again. Oh, come nearer—closer around me. Come, Betty! Come, Olaf! Come, Martha! Oh, Martha, it seems as though I had never seen you during all these years.

Lona.

No, I daresay not; your society is a society of bachelor-souls; you have no eyes for womanhood.

Bernick.

True, true. And for that very reason—it is settled, Lona, is it not?—you won't leave Betty and me?

Mrs. Bernick.

No, Lona; you must not!

Lona.

No; how could I think of going away and leaving you young people, just beginning life? Am I not your foster-mother? You and I, Martha, we are the two old aunts——. What are you looking at?

Martha.

How the sky is clearing; how it grows light over the sea. The *Palm Tree* has fortune with it——

Lona.

And happiness on board.

Bernick.

And we—we have a long, earnest day of work

before us; I most of all. But let it come! Gather close around me, you true and faithful women. I have learnt this, in these days: it is you women who are the pillars of society.

LONA.

Then you have learnt a poor wisdom, brother-in-law. [*Lays her hand firmly upon his shoulder.*] No, no; the spirits of Truth and Freedom—these are the Pillars of Society.

THE END.

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